

"MEMPHIS HISTORY DURING THE CRUMP ERA"

INTERVIEWS WITH MR. JAMES O. GRAHAM

APRIL-JULY 1988

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

TRANSCRIBERS - J. DOUGLAS SIMS & BETTY WILLIAMS

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PLACE Memphis, Tennessee

DATE September 9, 1989

James O. Graham
(INTERVIEWEE)

Charles W. Telford
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
of the John Willard Brister Library
of Memphis State University)

THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "MEMPHIS HISTORY DURING THE CRUMP ERA." THE DATE IS APRIL 28, 1988. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. JAMES O. GRAHAM. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY ELIZABETH SHELTON. INTERVIEW I .

DR. CRAWFORD: This interview is with Mr. James Otey Graham, who was born in Huntsville, Alabama, on May 30, 1908. What year, Mr. Graham, did you move to Memphis?

MR. GRAHAM: When I was six months old--1908.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you've been here a long time then. Jimmie, you got here before Mr. Crump became mayor and before World War I and when there were not many automobiles in the city. Let's talk a little about the time you were growing up in Memphis, which was very early. When we got into World War I you were just nine years old and, I guess, had just started school, hadn't you--a few years?

MR. GRAHAM: I started at Cummings School, and the only classmate I can remember from there is the late Stanley Dillard who was later Commissioner of the city and county courts.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's an outstanding school. Jimmie, you started in 1914 going to school at Cummings, and your parents were James Otey Graham and Alice Townsley Graham. Why did they decide to move to Memphis?



MR. GRAHAM: My mother was born and raised in Memphis. My dad was from Alabama, but he came to Memphis and worked under Mr. Bradford to learn to be a pharmacist. In those days a pharmacist, or a druggist as we called him, did not have to go to college or anything. He served as an apprentice.

DR. CRAWFORD: A lot of things were learned that way early. Now who was this he studied under?

MR. GRAHAM: Bradford.

DR. CRAWFORD: Bradford.

MR. GRAHAM: I don't remember his initials or first name, but he owned a drugstore where my daddy worked.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was the drugstore he owned?

MR. GRAHAM: Florida and Iowa. That's where my older sister was born, up over that drugstore. While my dad was working there, they lived up over the drugstore. They call it E.H. Crump Boulevard now. That was a funny neighborhood. But getting back to your question, he had a chance to go back to Alabama to Huntsville where all his relatives were and opened a drugstore in a hotel in Huntsville, and he went broke. Most of his customers were the type to drive up to the front of the hotel and holler or honk if they had automobiles and get a quarter's worth of stamps or something like that on credit. His credit business put him out of business there. So, he came back to Memphis and went to work for Washburn-Lyle Drugstore.

DR. CRAWFORD: Washburn-Lyle? Where was that one, sir?

MR. GRAHAM: Beale and Main. Later he worked at Mosely-Robinson. Then he decided he would go in business, so he and Walter Dunlap went in business at Main and Vance.



so he and Walter Dunlap went in business at Main and Vance.

DR. CRAWFORD: Walter Dunlap?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, Dunlap and Graham's is what they called the drugstore. Well, their partnership fell out some way or another. We lived next door to the Dunlaps and had a joint automobile and it was bought through the drugstore. One Sunday my dad would have it, the next Sunday Walter Dunlap would have it. We'd drive to Olive Branch and places like that.

Then when he left there he worked for Mr. Mills at Mississippi and McLemore. He was working in the drugstore there when he talked to Abe Plough. Mr. Plough asked him did he wish to buy Battier's Drugstore at Hernando and Beale. It was a pretty big operation, and so my daddy said , "No." The old drugstore where he had worked for Mr. Bradford at Florida and Iowa was for sale, so Mr. Abe suggested he buy it. So he bought it and opened Graham's Drugstore at Florida and Iowa.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was his own?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, that was his own other than what Daddy owed on it when he died. He was operating it at his death.

DR. CRAWFORD: About what year did he get that store, sir?

MR. GRAHAM: 1914.

DR. CRAWFORD: When you started school?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah, because I remember we moved in 1914, my first year in school, and I started to Riverside.

DR. CRAWFORD: You went part of one year at Cummings school?

MR. GRAHAM: Right.



DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you living when you started school?

MR. GRAHAM: 877 Stafford, the corner of Neptune and Stafford.

DR. CRAWFORD: And, then, in 1914 you moved and, let's see, you were at Fort Pickering then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What school did you start to then when you moved?

MR. GRAHAM: Riverside.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was it located?

MR. GRAHAM: On Wisconsin just west of Pennsylvania.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did you go there?

MR. GRAHAM: I went there to 1917 when my daddy died in June. I had such a temper and was so mean that Mother sent me to CBC, Christian Brothers College.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a good school then.

MR. GRAHAM: It was at 612 Adams, and I was sent there as a boarder student, and I would go home on Friday night and come back on Sunday night. I'd get to go home for the weekend.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you would stay at the school through the week?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, we had a little boys' dormitory and a big boys' dormitory. I was in the little boys' dormitory, and the late Brother Luke Joseph, who was one of the most marvelous men I ever knew, took me as his personal student and Brother Arthemian, who was prefect of the dormitory, would give me an apple for helping him grade papers. Each week we got what they called a degree; you got a weekly degree with your grade on it. I was pretty smart in books because I couldn't do anything



else but study. I'd be on the honor roll every week. But they didn't make me take catechism, and I didn't have to get up and go to mass every morning. Brother Arthemian waddled like a duck, and he had a cane. He'd come down through that dormitory at 6 o'clock-- beds, no private rooms-- and with a long cane he'd knock those Catholics out of bed. But the two Protestants didn't have to get out of bed to go to mass.

DR. CRAWFORD: A few years ago, Jimmie, the Shelby County Historical Commission, of which Ben Schultze is a member, put up a historical marker to Christian Brothers there on Adams where it used to be. So there is one there now, although, of course, the school is gone.

MR. GRAHAM: Brother Luke would get us doing World War I and, if we were through with study hall (you had to study, everybody had to be at study hall) he'd march us all down Adams to Main Street and all the way down to the Princess Theater to see "The Birth of A Nation." I never will forget all of us marching down there. Those were the days we'd have a good time there at CBC. But I'll never forget Brother Luke Joseph, because he'd always greet you and say, "Graham, pray for me." If anybody didn't need praying for, it was him. He ought to have been praying for me. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a good thing to say.

MR. GRAHAM: That was his greeting, "Pray for me."

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, how long did you stay at Christian Brothers?

MR. GRAHAM: My mother remarried in 1918, and we bought a house out east at 1447 Nelson. Then we moved from there

way down to south Memphis near Florida and Mallory. When we moved there I left CBC the first time. (I re-entered CBC later.) But I went to Mallory Heights they called it then, which later was Earnest Adams School, which is closed, and was at Norwood and Main Street. I went to school there, and then from there we moved to Highland Heights and I started at Treadwell.

DR. CRAWFORD: And how long were you at Treadwell?

MR. GRAHAM: The eighth through the tenth, because it was just junior high school then. I finished there in 1924--tenth grade at Treadwell. I rode an old T Model Ford wagonette to Messick High School. I went there in '24-'25 and '25-'26. I graduated there in '26.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did the wagonette look like? I've heard of them, but I don't believe I've ever seen a picture. That was an early school bus?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, but this wasn't drawn by mules. When they started Messick in 1912 they even had a motor-driven vehicle then. But it was an old T Model Ford sort of like a bus we have now only they called them wagonettes. It was a body built on a T Model chassis.

DR. CRAWFORD: It had benches in it, I guess, or seats?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, it had long seats; you'd sit facing each other. They weren't individual seats or two seats. If we missed it we had to walk from Tutwiler and Highland, where we'd catch the wagonette, all the way to Messick High School if you couldn't hitchhike. Highland in those days couldn't have been over 30 feet wide, about enough for two cars with a person



walking between them. It wasn't curbed and guttered.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was it paved at that time?

MR. GRAHAM: It was paved. But you had to walk or hitchhike, and there were very few vehicles going across there. So many a morning I missed that bus and walked from home to Messick High School.

DR. CRAWFORD: Boy, that is a long walk. I would think it would encourage you to be on time.

MR. GRAHAM: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: What color was the wagonette, the early school bus?

MR. GRAHAM: No uniform color, whatever color the owner drove. They just got so much for furnishing it.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were privately owned, then?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have to pay to ride it or did they get paid by the schools?

MR. GRAHAM: They paid. Some of the people from Treadwell went to Tech High. There wasn't any stringent rule which one you could go to, so some of them went to Tech High. But my older sister had gone to Messick, and all of my friends had gone there, and all of them from Treadwell on the basketball team were going to Messick, so we lifted Messick's basketball and football team from Treadwell.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, what did the streets look like? For example, what did Highland look like? It was a narrow but paved street. It didn't have gutters. Did it have sidewalks?

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MR. GRAHAM: No sidewalks or gutters.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they have traffic lights that early?

MR. GRAHAM: No, never heard of them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember when they came in?

MR. GRAHAM: No, I don't.

DR. CRAWFORD: Some things you just get used to and forget how long they've been around. What do you remember of downtown Memphis? For a while, when you were at Christian Brothers, you know you were close that you'd walk down to the theater and so forth. What did downtown look like then?

MR. GRAHAM: Probably like Somerville, Tennessee, or something like that. Most things were built there and you went from Beale Street to Adams and that was more or less it. You had a number of theaters in Memphis, picture shows we called them in those days. You started there and you'd have three in one block. From Jefferson to Adams you had Empire Number 1, the Beauty, and the Queen--three theaters just in one block. Two on one side of the street, and one on the other.

DR. CRAWFORD: There were a lot of them on Main Street, weren't there?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Let's see, you would start with the Suzore, it was up by the fire station just north of Jackson and Main, and come on down till you get to the Beauty, Queen and Empire Number 1 all between Jefferson and Adams. Then on further down you had the Pantages, which later became Warner Brothers. Across from that was Majestic Number 1. Then you went on to between McCall and Beale where you had the Strand, Empire #2,



Majestic Number 2 across the street right where the Gayoso Hotel was, which is Goldsmith's now, and then the Princess and the Orpheum. The Negroes could not get into any of those shows. Even if a black maid carried a white child to a picture uptown, they'd have to take him or her to a Black show on Beale Street.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now the Black theaters were on Beale Street?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you ever get down to the riverfront then?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. Actually, I had the privilege and honor of calling the Republican president-to-be a jackass looking over a white washed fence. We were down there in 1927 during the flood. Everybody went down there. I wasn't a good swimmer, but I was hanging around the swimming pool then and George Stokes and Gip Gillespie and Charlie Rainey and all of them went down and volunteered to get on the boats and then go out on the skiff and bring people in off the levies.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were being rescued by boats and brought to Memphis?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, under the supervision of the Red Cross. So I was hanging around down there with them, and we'd do things. They had a number of bales of hay piled over there. This guy with his stiff collar and little bow tie came up to me and said, "You guys start loading that hay."

I said, "Who the hell are you talking to?"

He said, "You."

I said, "You're not talking to me. As far as I'm concerned you look like a jackass looking over a white washed fence." He



later become President Hoover. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: That was President Hoover? He was in charge of relief of some kind while you were there and trying to give you orders?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah, giving me orders. Now, if he'd have asked me, I'd have toted that load. But he ordered me. I never could take an order. Even in the Army I couldn't take an order.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, your mother could have told him you had a temper.

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. But Captain Wykoff had the St. Francis boat. They would ride. I'd stay on there, but I wouldn't go out in the skiff because I wasn't a strong enough swimmer. But they'd bring them back in. If they picked up a dead person, they'd leave the skiff tied to the back of the boat and tie it on the end of the boat and bring it on back.

But then I can remember the '37 flood. I was very active in that. I was working for the Health Department.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, you saw the '27 and the '37 flood, which might have been even higher, but they had the levy system in then, didn't they?

MR. GRAHAM: No, they had Mr. Crump. He stayed up day and night up near the American Snuff Company? He went up there and they were building sand bags all around the American Snuff Company to keep the river from coming in there. They sand bagged all of north Memphis and all the Nonconnah Creek levy and all of south Memphis. Mr. Crump went up to the American Snuff



Company and saw them doing the sand bags and said,

"Who's in charge of this?"

Will Fowler, the city engineer, said, "I am."

He said, "Make them twice as high and twice as thick."

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was in the '27 or '37?

MR. GRAHAM: That was '37. So, he did. Then down on the south end of town, they couldn't see to work at night--didn't have lights. He told Joe Brennan with the Light, Gas and Water division, "String some lights." And he got lights strung all the way around there so they could keep working all night. He sent deputy sheriffs out to bring in people to load those sandbags. He didn't wait for volunteers. You'd be surprised how many wealthy people's chauffeurs got picked up in one of the night clubs.

DR. CRAWFORD: And taken to the levy?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. They had on spats, derbys, and everything else loading these sandbags.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was the flood of '37.

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. These wealthy people would be in this night club out in the county some place. Well, Mr. Crump really got that thing done. He stayed up night and day on that thing. I don't know if he ever finished high school. I doubt if he ever finished high school.

DR. CRAWFORD: He did not, sir.

MR. GRAHAM: He knew enough of the engineering to hold that levy and save Welsh Lumber Company and McCallum-Robinson--McCullum Robinson--Federal Compress and others along Bodley down near Nonconnah Creek--he knew enough to hold those by just piling them



taller and deeper. He got it done.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now of the two floods, I think I have read that the water was higher in the '37 flood. But how did it look to you? Did it look higher then?

MR. GRAHAM: I can't remember that. I remember in the '37 flood Mr. Schmidt (we called him Dutch Schmidt; I don't remember his first name) was State Sanitary Engineer. He came to Memphis and found out that I was fooling around at the levy and sent me to the refugee camp at the Fairgrounds. I had charge of sanitation at the Fairgrounds. There were very few commodes or washbasins. So I called Horace Tuggle, the County Sanitary Engineer, and told him to get me some pit privies out there. Well, if they said they were too sick to get out of the Auto Show Building and the Women's Building where we were housing people, I told this Red Cross worker to give them a dose of castor oil.

You know, that got them all out of the building. Well, they'd make everybody, unless they were really sick, get out and sun on some old wagons. They used to have these floats built at the Fairgrounds and stored at the auditorium there. All those floats were out there--big flatbed wagons.

DR. CRAWFORD: They used them in parades, didn't they?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. So, we set us up a church out there. I never will forget this black minister who was preaching. I walked up to him, and I said, "We got plenty of pit privies now." He stopped his sermon right there and says, "I want to tell you something. The good white folks done give us some necessary houses. If it's necessary to go, use them." They



were just using the bushes and everything around the Agriculture Building.

DR. CRAWFORD: Right, at the Fairgrounds. Now the refugees from the flood were picked up and rescued by steamboat and brought to Memphis and then they were taken to the Fairgrounds?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, and some schools. They put them in some schools.

DR. CRAWFORD: How high was the water, Jimmie, in the flood of '27? Where do you remember it got up to in the city?

MR. GRAHAM: I know it came all over south Memphis. I can't say an exact point, but I know those saw mills, and there was a place down there that made things that go in the railroad crossties to fill them up, I forget what they are. But those saw mills down there, they were all flooded and the same way at north Memphis--the water got in there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yeah, but along the bluffs, things were different, I guess.

MR. GRAHAM: That's true, although the snuff company has always been right there at Front and Mill, and they were covered up in the '37 flood. Now the '27 flood, I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was Mud Island under water then?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yeah. It was under water all over, way into Arkansas.

DR. CRAWFORD: You could look way out across there and see nothing but water?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah, you couldn't see the end of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: It didn't get to Crump Street, did it?

MR. GRAHAM: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, wasn't there a cave-in about 1927? The bluff caved off and later, after that, they built Riverside. Didn't that happen about '27?

MR. GRAHAM: I just don't recall that. I remember it happening, but I can't remember when.

DR. CRAWFORD: I was wondering if it was caused by the flood. I think it happened in '27, but I didn't know.

MR. GRAHAM: That was down south--around Riverside Park is where it caved off.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they built Riverside Drive after that. The Federal Barge Company had a place a little further down, didn't they, closer to the bridges?

MR. GRAHAM: Now there used to be a place south of the Old Frisco bridge called the Sand Plant down there. That was before Delta Refining Company. They had the sand plant down there. What the sand plant did, I don't know. But two people who boarded with my grandmother on Arcadian Hill had worked at the sand plant.

DR. CRAWFORD: Didn't they have a loading chute or conveyor of some kind that led out into the water about where Riverside Drive is now? I think I've seen that in early pictures.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, that's down between the Rivermont and Beale Street. It was a chute for coal from the barges.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they loaded or unloaded there. Now, did they bring those refugees in from a big area--upriver

and downriver both?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I know some came from Osceola and some as far away as Helena, Arkansas. That's ninety miles.

Not by river, but by road it would be.

DR. CRAWFORD: Upstream and downstream. I've seen some pictures of people out on the levy waiting to be picked up by steamboats.

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah, they would do that and then---there were a lot of cows and horses on the levy--they would break open a bale of hay for them to eat.

DR. CRAWFORD: Feed them there by throwing hay out to them? That's what that hay was doing that Herbert Hoover wanted you to load. It was to feed the animals that had taken refuge on the levy? I understand now; I didn't know that. Who paid for this relief service when they supplied hay for the livestock and took care of the people at the Fairgrounds? Did the city do that or did they get federal help?

MR. GRAHAM: I really don't know who paid it. I know the Red Cross paid for quite a bit of it because Mr. Crump said they needed more boats. So he told Lee Lumber Company to make a bunch of little boats--sort of a one-man boat where you could get one or two people. They said, "Who will pay for it?" He said, "I just said do it. It'll get paid for." So they did it. But I know that Lee Lumber Company made some skiffs or boats and, actually, Mr. Crump didn't worry about who was going to pay for it.

DR. CRAWFORD: But he did get paid for them?



MR. GRAHAM: They all got paid for it. I think the Red Cross paid for it. I'm sure the city didn't pay for it because they didn't have any money then. I guess not too far after that, back in '31 or '32, they had to lay off people. You'd work two weeks and lay off two weeks.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, that was, of course, Depression times. You graduated from Messick in 1926, was it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you do after you graduated?

MR. GRAHAM: That first summer I worked on a hardwood flooring crew. In those days I had a cousin who was married to a contractor. So her two brothers and his three brothers and myself were the crew. We floored houses. In other words, we'd go in a house with a thousand feet and John D., the owner of the firm, would tell us, (he'd let three of us off, maybe, from his car) he would say, "Lay, scrape, fill, and shellac it, and when you get through you can have the rest of the day off." You know we'd be out of that house with a thousand feet of flooring finished before two o'clock!

DR. CRAWFORD: That was an incentive to work hard, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. We went as far as Coldwater, Mississippi, and boarded down there, and we'd be playing baseball by two o'clock.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that new home construction or were you working in old homes?

MR. GRAHAM: New home only. But in those days we didn't have sanding machines. You scraped and sanded on your



hands and knees.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, of course, 1926 was a pretty prosperous time. They were building, and that went on a little while. How long did you work at the flooring construction business?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I worked there until fall when I started at Memphis State playing football.

DR. CRAWFORD: In fall of '26?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you remember about Memphis in the summer you graduated, the summer of 1926, from Messick? What did it look like then? Was it beginning to grow? Did you see more cars?

MR. GRAHAM: Probably. Of course, we didn't at Messick. There wasn't over a half dozen cars. Honey Johnson owned a car, Claud Bowen's family owned a car. But we had very few cars there in '26 at school. And you could find plenty of parking places at Memphis State then. Only probably the people with money we used to say would have a car to come to school in.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did the others get there?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, I was living in Highland Heights, and I'd hitchhike or walk. I walked many a day from down there at 3323 Tutwiler to Memphis State and walked after football practice back home. Because in those days, they wouldn't give a local boy a scholarship of anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Not even athletics?

MR. GRAHAM: No. You might have gotten one academic. I don't



know; I wasn't that smart. But you couldn't get an athletic scholarship. They gave it to the "country boys", I call them. But a city boy didn't have a chance. And Joe Koch, whose family owned this land--(this used to be all Koch's plantation) -- he had gone to CBC with me in the fourth grade and ended up a center on the Memphis State football team out there. But Joe had a Ford, and I'd walk from my house to the top of the hill on Highland and then ride with Joe when I'd catch him.

DR. CRAWFORD; Now where was the top of the hill on Highland?

MR. GRAHAM: Between Kenwood and the next two streets south there. They about run into the Trezevant Manor. If these streets were projected it would run into Trezevant Manor. That's about where the top of the hill was then, maybe a little north of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had taken part in athletics in high school, hadn't you?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, I played football, basketball, and baseball. In fact, everybody on Messick was a three- or five-letterman. I was just a three-letterman, but Harry Sharp and Stanley Dillard, they were four-lettermen. Harry Sharp was a five-letterman. He was later captain of a Tennessee basketball team and he had played football, of course.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did you decide to go to Memphis State, or State Teachers' College then?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I'm trying to think.

DR. CRAWFORD: You knew Stanley Dillard from school.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. They moved to Youngstown, Ohio, and his



mother died, and then Mr. Dillard remarried. So, they came back here, and he was in some kind of business at Dunlap and Jefferson. I can't remember. Seems to me like it was the printing business. But they lived right down here on Powell. His stepmother was Harry Sharp's mother's sister. So they were kissin' cousins, I guess you'd say. Stan and I decided we'd go there. Harry and Frank Wells and E.F. (Sleepy) Verdel all went to U.T. at Knoxville. But we couldn't pull it.

DR. CRAWFORD: It cost more to go over there, didn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: It didn't cost anything but your books and, I think ten dollars registration in those days.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, at Memphis State.

MR. GRAHAM: So we went there. I made the first team in that year and Stanley Dillard was on the second. We went over to Jonesboro to play the first game.

DR. CRAWFORD: In basketball?

MR. GRAHAM: Football. The bus broke down. We had Fred Smith's bus. The team got out and pushed and pushed and got it there. After we finally got it there and we had time to dress before the game. Well, I started.

DR. CRAWFORD: You played Arkansas State in a college game?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. Hank Smith threw about three-- he threw a ball like a bullet--I missed all three passes. Next thing I knew Stanley Dillard was in at my right end, and he was the right end from then on.

DR. CRAWFORD: What position were you playing?

MR. GRAHAM: Right end then. So I came back in the next game we

played the U.T. Doctors. I think they beat us 60 to nothing.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was about 1926?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: They still had the U.T. Doctors team then?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. So, we had two big guys. Roy Green played one tackle and the man who later became Dr. Paul Rochelle played the other tackle. Both of them weighed over 225. I weighed exactly what I weigh now, 170. So those U.T. Doctors kept backing them out, see, backing them out and just running over us. I said, "Coach, let me go in there at right tackle."

He said, "You know the signals?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Go ahead." That was Zach.

DR. CRAWFORD: Zach Curlin was your coach?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. I went in because the two big guys was choking up. So I get in there, and I cussed them out. I say, "You big yellow son-of-a-gun." I did that in high school. I did that to Tarz Holt.

DR. CRAWFORD: Tarzan Holt, yes.

MR. GRAHAM: He's a dentist.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he was on the U.T. Doctors football team.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, he played left end, and I played right tackle.

Tarz Holt and a big guy named Paine were playing that tackle. And they took me back every time twenty or thirty yards and died laughing. And I said, "You S.O.B.'s." (Laughter) And they kept taking me back. They beat me so bad that I was out



for the year. They crucified me. Those big guys said, "That smart-aleck punk." So then I didn't have any money and at least I could eat at the training table when I was going in and sleep at home. So, I dropped out of school.

DR. CRAWFORD: For that year?

MR. GRAHAM: For that year. I thought it was permanent. So, I dropped out of that year and quit. That's when I was treasurer of the freshman class. I was looking at my ledger upstairs. Do you know I didn't collect a cent in dues from the freshman class of 1926? I don't know who succeeded me on that thing.

*** To top it off, in 1926, after I had dropped out of school, I got all "F's". I didn't withdraw; I just quit. I never could get that off my transcript. Of course, I didn't make any "F's". ****

But anyhow, I quit, and the next year I went to my mother and I said, "Do you care if I go back to school?"

And she said, "No."

I said, "Well, Zach has contacted me and would like to have me back."

So I went over there. And he said, "I can't give you a scholarship. The Athletic Board won't permit it. But you can eat at the training table and sleep in the dormitory, because I run the dormitory." So I did that and didn't have to do anything other than play football to go to school.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was in the fall of 1927?

*** Mr. Graham wanted this inserted in proper sequence.



MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What had you done in the meantime? Did you go back to work?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I took a job at Sampson Cleaners driving a cleaning truck.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were they located then, sir?

MR. GRAHAM: Sampson Cleaners, was at the corner of Vandalia and Broad. I think they're still there.

DR. CRAWFORD; I believe they still are.

MR. GRAHAM: I left that job, though. I had a flat tire, and I called Mr. Sampson and told him I had a flat tire.

He said, "Well my solicitors or drivers repair them themselves."

I said, "The key is in the truck, there's no cleaning in the truck, the truck's sitting up here on Summer Avenue." And I quit. I wasn't about to change the tire on that old truck.

Then I came back, and I started working refereeing basketball calling junior high games and a few high school games.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they pay anything for that then?

MR. GRAHAM: I'd go out to Bartlett and work a game for five dollars. As far as that's concerned, when we organized the Mid-South Football Officials Association, we worked on a percentage basis. At Crump Stadium, if they didn't take in so much money, we worked for nothing. I remember Red Cavette sitting there, and we'd count the crowd, and we could tell whether it was a \$5 game or a nothing game or a \$12.50 game, and \$15 was as much as you could get.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was pretty good then.



MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. So we'd do that, you see. It's a funny thing about Red Cavette who is the best football official that ever lived, Red Cavette.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you spell his last name?

MR. GRAHAM: C-A-V-E-T-T-E. His name is Ersell. But Red is premier. In fact, I thought he was so good he and I ran for president of the association, and I voted for him, and he beat me by one vote.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your vote?

MR. GRAHAM: I beat myself because I thought he was a better man, and he proved it. He and the late Cliff Norville, are the two best officials I ever saw on football turf. And I've seen some of the best.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you did that for a while after you quit school?

MR. GRAHAM: I did that until I went in the Army. I kept doing that even while I was working with the Health Department.

DR. CRAWFORD: You did that through the whole thirties, then?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: And in the fall of '27 you went back to Memphis State and Zach Curlin was coaching and you were able to live in the dormitory then. Where was the dormitory on campus?

MR. GRAHAM: It was the only building east of the Administration Building, directly across from the Administration Building.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a red brick building then?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. And that was before they even built the old gym. That wasn't built till 1928, I guess, because we used to dress and undress in the Administration Building. We played basketball in the Administration Building. We didn't have a gym.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think they built the old library about in 1926, or at least started it then.

MR. GRAHAM: It was there when I went there, and Mother Mynders was the librarian.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mrs. Mynders, the wife of President Mynders.

MR. GRAHAM: She was a great old gal.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you study very much or did you have time to?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, actually, I couldn't buy books. The first year when I went back in '27 my sister was working for a dentist, and she gave me lunch money. In '27 I didn't live in the dorm. It was '28 before Zach let me live in it because Gerry was working for Dr. Gragg as a dental assistant. And dental assistants in those days were bookkeepers and everything for the dentist. And she would give me lunch money, and that's all I had. I couldn't buy books.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you eat at the cafeteria at school?

MR. GRAHAM: No, actually, she gave me money and during football season I ate at the cafeteria at school, but after football season I ate over at Scruggs' place across the railroad tracks. Harry Scruggs.

DR. CRAWFORD: Harry Scruggs' place on Southern?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, across the railroad tracks.

DR. CRAWFORD: He had a restaurant over there in the late twenties, then.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. Oh, he had it up until--I know he had it in '29 because that's the first year I worked at the swimming pool as a lifeguard. And he came out there my first payday to collect \$2.75 I owed him.

I would hold vespers on Sunday evening to talk to the girls in the dormitory, and then Dr. Nellie Angel Smith would let me take a girl on a date. I was the only man in that school who could get a girl out legitimately with Dr. Smith's approval. She trusted me. She was head of the girls' dormitory and a Latin teacher.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was Mrs. Mynders?

MR. GRAHAM: No, Nellie Angel Smith was head of the Girl's Domitory as well as Latin teacher.

DR. CRAWFORD: She was Dean of Women at some point, wasn't she?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah, and she was also in charge of Mynders Hall.

She and a Dr. Steele were the only two PhD.'s we had there. But as far as having books in school, you really didn't need them. I took Jerry Willard Finch's agriculture class. We had chickens and cows the first year I was over there.

DR. CRAWFORD: They still had the farm?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now did they use that to supply the cafeteria?

MR. GRAHAM: They'd teach you to caponise chickens. I remember when our class went down there and we got to capon-

ise some roosters, they all died. They bled to death on us. We didn't take to that. But you take Jerry Willard, he was crazy about Hack and Mack from the University of Tennessee--McEver and Hackman. And so you could get him talking about Tennessee and Hack and Mack. You know it's alleged that they were kidnapped from Vanderbilt?

DR. CRAWFORD: No, I didn't know that.

MR. GRAHAM: They had enrolled in Vanderbilt and Tennessee sent over and got them and took them to Knoxville and held them captive until they agreed to stay.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that's the way they played ball then?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, you'd do anything. When Carl Cannon came out to Memphis State, he and Cliff Tarver were bouncers in a nightclub and Carl was a plasterer in the daytime. Neither one of them ever finished Tech High School, but that old principal there had Carl Cannon making an A in math and A in English and stuff like that. They'd alter their transcript and come on over to Teachers College. They played pretty good.

Cliff played first string left tackle there in 1927. Carl never did get to play much. He was loyal and actually became trainer for the team and then went to Mississippi State with Coach Allen McKeen.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year was that?

MR. GRAHAM: In nineteen twenty-nine. I was captain of the football team. I wanted another coach because Coach Curlin would go along the line and kick some of the guys in the butt. I told him, "If you ever kick my butt, you are going to



have to whip me." He never did kick me, never did cuss me. I told him "I am going to play like this is my last play. I'm going to give it all I've got every play and that is it, but nobody is going to abuse me." He would kick those country boys in the butt. [Cecil McLaughlin Sr. and Artie King coached at Memphis State] And he gave Jimmy Hewlett, who was later principal in the school here in Memphis, and the two Baker boys--one of them was later president of Bethel College--he gave them 25 cents apiece and left them in Memphis and they spent the time in Court Square. Cousin Otis [O.H.] Jones, who used to be bursar there, was Sam Johnson's cousin--he and Cousin Lillian--so I called them Cousin Otis and Cousin Lillian. And we were down in South Memphis at Mallory Heights which was later Ernest Adams and so we went down to Mr. Jovin's house and met with Mr. Ball and Mr. Jones. We were going to get Zach out as coach.

So we got eleven things against him and sent them to the State Board of Education. The Commissioner of Education--I think his name was Harned or something--had gone to Vandy with Zach. The team asked for a new coach but had to settle for an assistant to coach the line. They gave the team a choice of Paul Hug or Alan McKeen. I said, "Well, let's take Alan McKeen." He was freshman coach at the University of Tennessee at that time."

In 1929 Alan McKeen came on as Assistant Coach. Zach hated me after I tried to get him out. I think ten out of the eleven starting players that we had--we didn't have but twenty-three players on the squad in '29--were for me. I said, "Look, you'll never put me in a game and you'll never take me out. I'm captain



of the team and I am going in and out when I want to."

So I said, "McKeen is line coach, and I'll let him substitute me, but you can't substitute me, Zach. You can put me off the squad, but if you do, your nine starters are going to Sikeston, Missouri and play for the Cape Teachers." I could take the whole team with me.

DR. CRAWFORD: (Laughter) He had to keep the team.

MR. GRAHAM: He had to keep the team. That stopped that. That whole time Zach didn't substitute me. Later, we became very good friends. Zach was a very close friend of mine at the time of his death.

DR. CRAWFORD: He must have respected you.

MR. GRAHAM: Later even if he was going to officiate or had a ball game over at Russellville or Little Rock--a college game--he would call me and get me to go with him as one of the officials. We got to be good friends. He was tough.

You know the reason he lost his job at Central High School was because he hit a player with a baseball bat.

DR. CRAWFORD: Before he went on to Memphis State?

MR. GRAHAM: Yeah. The twins, Chester and Lester Bernard, coached at Memphis State back in '22. One of them left and went to Valparaiso as coach and the other went to Springfield, Missouri as a Springfield Teacher's coach. The one that went to Valparaiso took Harmon (Slick) Headden who was playing at Normal (Memphis State). Bo Hundley and John Barnhill went to Tennessee. Of course, Memphis State was a Normal School then and they could do that. Three of them went to Tennessee and

of course, Bo Hundley and John Barnhill were All-American at Tennessee.

Zach was a fiery person.

DR. CRAWFORD: He must have had a temper.

MR. GRAHAM: I can remember Jerry Willie Finch, the agriculture teacher. He would put the questions on the board and go out of the class. So everybody in class would put a blank piece of paper on his desk because he never graded your paper. So everybody put a blank paper on Jerry Willie's desk. You could get him talking about Tennessee football and he was a talker. Some of us--Slick Head and some of us--sat in the back seats and would spit tobacco juice all over the radiators. That's the kind of class we had. I made pretty good grades in Jerry Willie's classes.

Dr. Scates was the history man. He chewed tobacco during class. He is the one that taught me to chew tobacco and swallow it. (Laughter) I sat on the front row and I never had a book in his class but I made good grades in every one of them because I listened and took good notes. I still take good notes.

Papa Dean was head of the Education Department. I don't know if he even had a B.S. Degree or not. On his examination he would say, "Outline the book." Well, you could remember ten or twelve chapters of the book, you could give your own ideas on and pass that. I never had a book in that class. The only classes I had books in were in chemistry and math.

My last class was under my favorite teacher. My last class was on June 6, 1931. The boys down at the S.A.M. house had put on a party for me. Man, I was still groggy. I had an 8 o'clock



examination under Miss Ellen Davies, who later married and became Ellen Davies Rodgers. I was taking a freshman education course and I needed that credit plus six weeks summer school.

I got through with that thing in a hurry, walked up and started to give her the paper and leaned for her desk but missed it. (Laughter) She still remembers it! I mentioned it to her at a breakfast at her plantation. She gave me a breakfast party when I retired. I was thinking you were there. I'm sure you were invited because you were on the list.

DR. CRAWFORD: I've been out there, but not for that occasion, sir.

MR. GRAHAM: Boy, she fed us that morning. I told them that she used to teach me in college and she just died laughing. She did, and she couldn't have been very old but she was a good teacher.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was in 1931?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: By that time the Depression had started and work was pretty hard to find and money was hard to get.

Why did you stop at that time in 1931?

MR. GRAHAM: I was working for the Park Commission.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you needed to work full time?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Well, what happened was I could have finished but Miss Minnie changed my hours. I was working from two p.m. to ten p.m. and she put me on an unlighted park--Overton Park--and I had to work from nine a.m. to five p.m.

DR. CRAWFORD: During the day.



MR. GRAHAM: And they didn't have night school.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was Miss Minnie now?

MR. GRAHAM: Miss Minnie Wagner, Superintendent of Recreation for the Park Commission.

DR. CRAWFORD: Miss Minnie Wagner. You had started working part time for the Park Commission in May, 1929. You did that and went to full time work in 1931.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Actually, in the fall of 1930. That is the reason I didn't play football in '30. I had already been out for football for four years, and had one more year that I could play. In those days they didn't follow the rules. I have played a football game on Saturday afternoon on Memphis State campus then go to Crosstown, Tennessee, that night fight six-rounds. Then on Sunday go to Helena, Arkansas and play semi-pro football all on one weekend.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was different then!

MR. GRAHAM: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: And 1931 was an important year for you, Jimmie, because that is the year that you left Memphis State. You had a full time job and it was in the middle of the Depression and that is the year you got married.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. My wife was working at Goldsmith's in the studio.

DR. CRAWFORD: Downtown?

MR. GRAHAM: Downtown. Well, that was the only Goldsmith's then.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's right, it had not moved out.

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MR. [Name] [Address]

DR. [Name] [Address]

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, we got married and we got along okay. Now, when I was with the Park Commission, I'd find some way to get off to go work a football game or basketball game or something extra.

I was noticing something in the morning paper about this guy coaching the nurses basketball--this guy from U.T. Nurses. I used to be the referee for the nurses league. We had Methodist, Baptist, St. Joseph and the University of Tennessee. I used to referee basketball games like that. Then on Sundays, I refereed a Jewish basketball league at the Catholic Club. I was, of course, a Protestant going to the Christian Church then.

DR. CRAWFORD: Lindenwood, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. I went to St. Luke's before I got married.

Ernest C. Ball was my Sunday School teacher. I went to Mayor Walter Chandler one time applying for a promotion. Did I tell you about that? I repeat myself a lot.

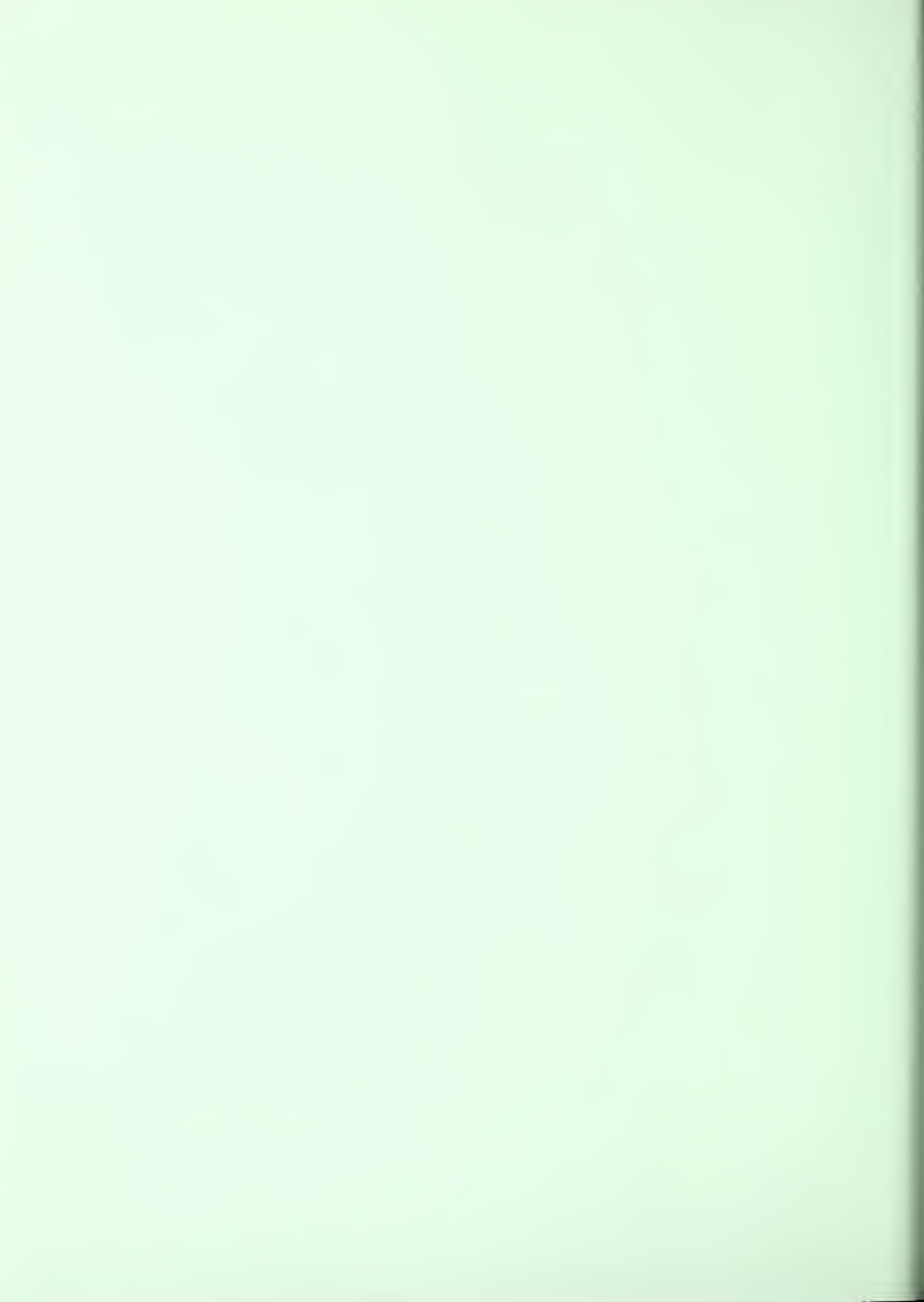
DR. CRAWFORD: No sir, not for the record, you didn't.

MR. GRANT

When I was a child, I was very fond of the sea. I used to go to the beach every day and play for hours. I was very happy and free.

I was not a very good student. I was always daydreaming and not paying attention in class. My teachers were very strict and I was often in trouble. I was a very naughty boy.

When I was a young man, I was very handsome and popular. I had many friends and was very confident. I was a very successful businessman and had a lot of money.



THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "MEMPHIS DURING THE CRUMP ERA." THE DATE IS MAY 12, 1988. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. JAMES O. GRAHAM. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. ALSO PRESENT IS MAJ. BEN SCHULTZE. TRANSCRIBED BY J. DOUGLAS SIMS. INTERVIEW II.

DR. CRAWFORD: Jimmie, last time we stopped at a very important year. We stopped at 1931, and that was the year that you got married and you started in serious work. I believe you left school that year.

MR. GRAHAM: I didn't plan to leave school. We got married on June 6. That was a Saturday, and we had a one-day honeymoon at the Peabody Hotel and we both went back to work Monday morning. But when I went back to work, Miss Minnie Wagner, superintendant of recreation for the city Park Commission, had changed my location. Instead of working two to ten so I could go to summer school and finish up and get my degree, she put me on Overton Park, which was a nine to five park and I had to work all day and in those days, State Teacher's College did not have night classes. I didn't get back to school until several years later, 1938.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it was good to get that job, because that was in the low part of the Depression, and jobs were hard to get then. How did you feel about that new job?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I didn't stay there too long. She just put



me there temporarily. They always sent me to the park where they had the toughest discipline problem. So I was transferred from there out to the South Side playground to get it straightened out. No one ever hit me with a bat like they did the previous park director.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I think maybe they knew better than to hit you with a bat. You were a football player and you were a strong young man, evidently.

MR. GRAHAM: And then they moved me to Peabody and Tanglewood, which is now the Handicapped, Inc. building. That was the old Peabody Community Center. So they put me there year-round. And there we had a very small park area, but we had some good teams there and a good community center.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you an athletic supervisor or a coach?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, you did everything back in those days. That was during the Depression. You were a janitor, park director, referee, program planner -- you were it. The park director was it. But I had it on that janitorial service. No kid got a piece of equipment until he swept out the building and did the dusting and everything. So we got cleaned up pretty well there. The kids would do it if they wanted a basketball or a softball or anything. They'd get the place cleaned up. Or if it was an outdoor park, they'd police the grounds, you know, if there was a watermelon rind or paper or any of those things, and then we'd play. But we worked before we'd play.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were all of the streets around there paved in

1931?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, they were all paved.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was mostly residential area then, wasn't it?

Did they have businesses along Union?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, at Cooper and Union, you had several businesses, a tire company, and a grocery store and at Peabody and Cooper you had Krouse's Bakery and a number of stores and there was a drugstore on the northwest corner of Cooper and Madison. I don't recall the name of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was there a photography studio there?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't remember one being there.

DR. CRAWFORD: There was a man named Bryant who owned one, but that may have been a few years later. And that is what is called Overton Square now -- at Cooper and Madison.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, well you had a drugstore there where Monroe comes into Cooper. Later it was Purdy-Jester Drugstore. And Lilly Bakery and then several shops around the corner, back west on Madison. There could have been one there.

DR. CRAWFORD: And did the streetcar line come out Madison to that corner?

MR. GRAHAM: It came out Madison and it turned on Cooper to Young and out Young to the Fairgrounds and it made a circle at the Fairgrounds and ran back the same way. Young to Cooper to Madison to Main Street.

DR. CRAWFORD: And there were some businesses around the Lennox area, I believe.

MR. GRAHAM: In the Lennox area Peabody playground was right there where the overpass went over for L&N Railroad



there. I believe it was L&N. I'm not sure.

DR. CRAWFORD: It's still part of the Park Commission. They have a small park there now, you know.

MR. GRAHAM: They still have it, and Handicapped, Inc. has a building there, the Skinner Center (Central and Tanglewood). Raymond Skinner gave them \$50,000 to get it started. At that time -- I'm trying to think, a drugstore, a grocer on the corner. On the southwest corner you had a grocery store and a drugstore. A crippled druggest. I can't recall his name. And then south, facing Cooper, you had the Lennox Cafe run by Angelo Theodore, a Greek. He later brought his girlfriend to Memphis and married her. They had a child and lived right up here on Kenwood for years. Next to the cafe was a barber shop. A little short barber. I can't recall his name. I can see him right now, though.

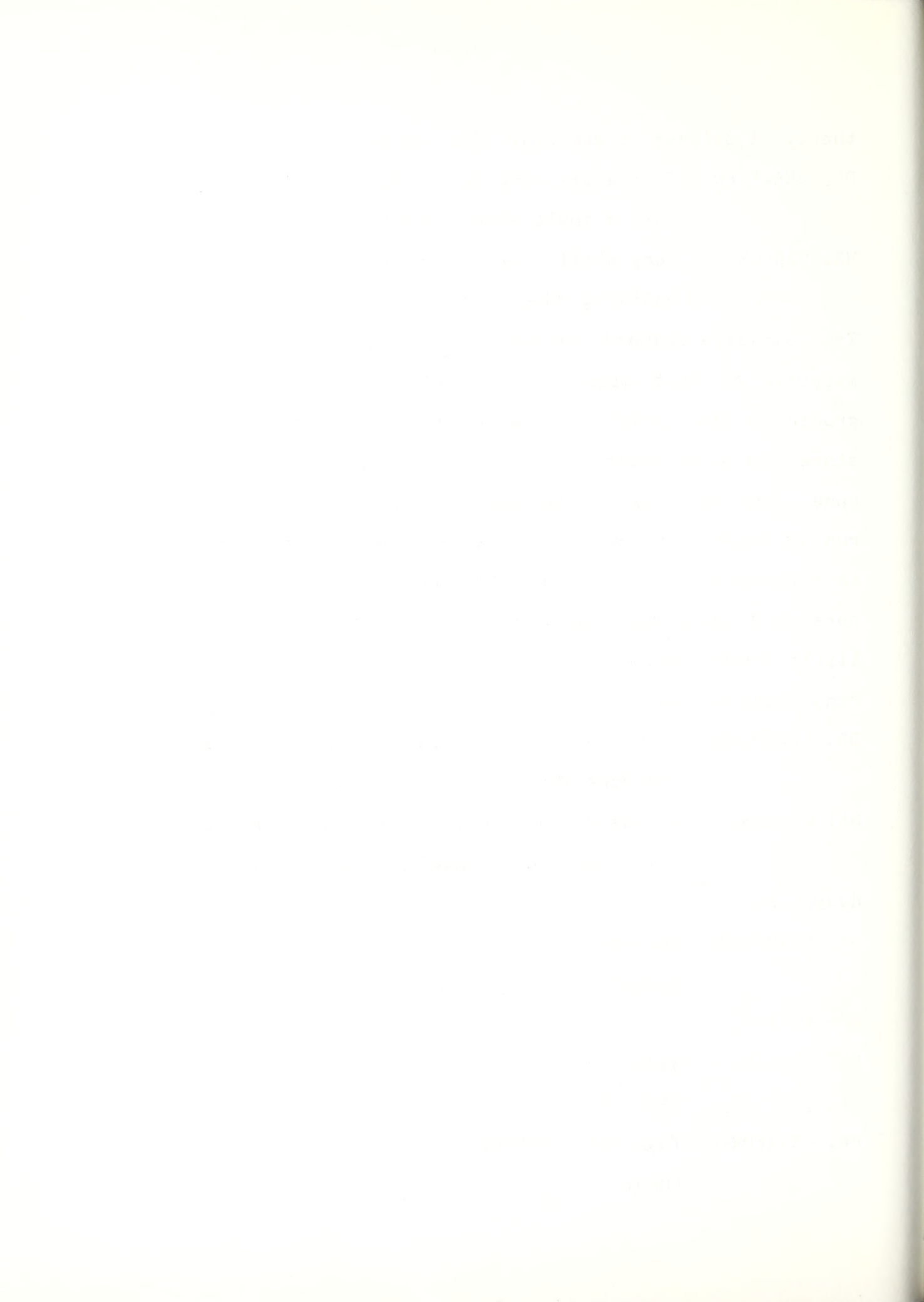
DR. CRAWFORD: I knew a teacher in the system named Sophie Theodore who was probably a member of that family.

MR. GRAHAM: If she was a Greek, she probably was. It could have been his daughter. Probably was Angelo's daughter.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was where you went to work, then, in the summer of 1931. And you were under the Park Commission.

MR. GRAHAM: Right. The Recreation Department of the Park Commission.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a pretty active part of city government, then.



MR. GRAHAM: It was. It was the only thing you had then during the Depression, because if people didn't go to the parks, they didn't have the money to do anything else. Especially the community centers in the evenings -- that was a haven for people. When kids got out of school, instead of hanging around on the corners of streets, they came to the community center. From two o'clock on, those community centers, they were popping.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well that was a good thing, because there was not a lot of money around during the thirties and people could use things like the public library and the park facilities and recreation centers.

MR. GRAHAM: Well we would have dramatic clubs. Of course, I didn't teach dramatics. We had some supervisors from the Park Commission that came around to teach. And dancing, tap dancing and that type dancing, and we built birdcages. We were trying to see who could build the best one.

DR. CRAWFORD: Sort of arts and crafts activity?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, but I had men 65 years old building bird houses and putting them in under their kids' names to win my prizes. [Laughter] Yes, we came out first on that bird building project. But we built some fancy birdhouses, because we had so many men out of jobs that would hang around and so we had checkers tournaments for the men and stuff like that, you know.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a really good thing for the city in the 1930's. Do you know who was on the Park Commission then?

MR. DEAN: I am not sure if I am right or not, but I think I am right.

part, they have been very much interested in the committee's work.

When it is for the benefit of the people, they are very much interested.

the official report of the committee is very much interesting.

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DR. DEAN: I am not sure if I am right or not, but I think I am right.

MR. GRAHAM: When I got a promotion, they had A. L. "Burt"

Parker, he was president of the Memphis Hotel Association, which was the Peabody, Gayoso, and Chisca. They all belonged to the same enterprise. And A.L. "Burt" Parker was chairman of the Park Commission. And then Mr. Willingham and Mr. Fisher of Fisher Automobile Company, they were the three Park Commissioners at that time. And they were the ones who picked me. Parker didn't want me, but the other two picked me over a number of applications who were better swimmers than me and better politically than me. Dave Renfrow, who was Superintendent of the whole Park Commission, Mr. Dave, wanted me. So I got the job there in '32. But that's the way I went to the Park Commission. They were the commissioners still on when they made me manager of the city swimming pools, superintendent, Mr. Dave called it.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was mostly summer work, then, wasn't it? Did they have indoor pools then?

MR. GRAHAM: They had the Shrine Building pool, the old Elk's Club, the Catholic Club, St. Agnes College -- Siena College, it was later named. They had a swimming pool. And the old Rex Club. U.T. had a swimming pool about as big as this living room. And the YMCA, of course. And then there was another indoor pool that pre-existed those that you don't hear anything about. I can't remember it being used in the winter, but it could have been. But it was on Linden just east of Fourth -- called the Linden Natatorium. Big Mac, Mr. McClure operated it. and it was part of the icehouse there. The icehouse probably had the purest water. No disinfection or anything. I would come from south

Memphis. We lived in south Memphis. That was years ago. But the Linden Natatorium was the first swimming pool that I ever heard of, even before the Y. Of course, the Y was there first, I think. The Leslie Stratton Y, which they have changed the name now. I think, it is a shame. But the indoor pools were actually where the people did their swimming. There was the Catholic Club, the old Elk's Club, the Shrine Building, the YMCA. They were the main indoor pools then.

DR. CRAWFORD: Recreation and exercise facilities were very important then. I don't think people value them as much now as they did then. Of course, you didn't have television and not as much else to do, and money was short then.

MR. GRAHAM: Which would bring me to -- this was in 1932, now, when I was made manager of the swimming pools. My winter job was director of the athletic building. It was at the fairgrounds, which was the old auto show building. We had three basketball courts there. Incidentally, it was a hardtop just like the streets, the entire floor and was heated by three potbellied stoves. But we had three basketball courts, an archery lane, a horseshoe lane, and tables on the sides for checkers. Checkers were the big thing then. And horseshoes -- man, we had horseshoes there. But we had teams coming in here from Independence, Mississippi, Olive Branch, Mississippi, West Memphis, Arkansas, Marion, Arkansas, playing in our leagues.

DR. CRAWFORD: In the horseshoes?

MR. GRAHAM: Basketball. We called it the tri-state basketball league. And incidentally, the Health Department

had a basketball team of male employees and guess who was the star of the team? Dr.L.M.Graves,[who] could play and was left-handed. He had a hook shot back in those days, when nobody had ever heard of anything but a two-handed shot.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was tall, wasn't he?

MR. GRAHAM: He was, I don't know, about six feet or six foot one. But he had starred in basketball and tennis at Vanderbilt. He was a regular up there, All-Southern basketball player. But he played on the team with Mr. Alfred H. Fletcher, who was the city sanitation engineer. Now he was a short man, couldn't have been over five-seven or eight. He played big. Some of the other players on the Health Department team were Alfred Latting and Wilbert Grisham and Harold Gip Gillespie.

And I would just pick up two of my grown young men and let them referee on two courts and I'd referee the center court all the time. I'd call the scores into the paper every night. We got good coverage in The Commercial. I tell you, if I liked a guy, I would give him all the publicity, you know. We had one, Gip Gillespie, who was sort of a prima donna. He never got over three or four points in the box scores. I'd give them to Alfred Latting. [Laughter] But we'd call them in there. And then I decided on Wednesday evenings we were not getting the crowds. We were getting ten thousand people a month, counting afternoon and night. Some of them were the same people who would come out afternoons and back at night, you know.

I went to the Kroger Company, down on Florida Street, and talked to the personnel director and we organized a Kroger League.

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All the Kroger stores in Memphis came out there every Wednesday night and we had activities for women and men too. And they'd bring their families and those bleachers we had there on the side wouldn't hold them. That kept it up.

Even at that, they came by and told me they were laying off everybody for two weeks at a time -- you worked two weeks and then were off for two weeks. Well I was the only married man there. I had Marion Hale, who was later superintendent of recreation for the Park Commission, Lou Chiozza, who later went to the big leagues, Philadelphia, I think it was, in baseball. And Henning Scott. But all three of them were single. I'd gotten married in '31. So I went to them and told them, I said, "You guys take a month off at a time and I'll just work a straight month and then I'll find me a job in that month someplace." So that was the agreement.

And then when I told Mr. Renfrow that I was leaving, he said, "You're not leaving. I turned you in to Mayor Overton as Superintendent. And no Superintendent is getting laid off." So I didn't have to take any time off.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were a superintendent of swimming pools and the athletic complex?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So I didn't have to take any time off. I'd have found a job. I never saw a day that you couldn't get on the street and sell papers or something, you know.

DR. CRAWFORD: You knew a lot of people, too.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I was very fortunate in having a wonderful



high school principal, Earnest C. Ball. Oh, Captain Ball was it. Well, I don't know of anybody that I've ever known on earth that I've ever admired any more than him. He was a great man.

DR. CRAWFORD: I told you that I interviewed him the year before his death.

MR. GRAHAM: Every job I ever asked for, he was my number one recommendation. Ernest C. Ball.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a good name to have on it.

MR. GRAHAM: And then Mr. Thomas Nelson Carpage and R. Bates Brown, those were my three regulars.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Bates Brown...

MR. GRAHAM: With S.C. Toof and Company. Yes, Bates, in fact, I've got two Bibles here. One that was my mother's and one from my wife that Bates picked out for me. And Toof didn't sell Bibles. He'd go with me to the Bible store up on Second street and he'd pick out the Bible for my mother and for my wife. He and Captain Ball probably did more for me to teach me to hold my temper.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were good friends to have.

MR. GRAHAM: I never could take an order. Even in the Army, I couldn't take an order. I swallowed a lot, but couldn't take them. Now you could ask me, say, "Let's do it," or "We'll do it," or "Howabout you do it?" But you say, "Graham, do this," I'd say, "Go to h---." I just never could take an order.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they helped you and they advised you, Bates Brown and Captain Ball.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. They were great men, both of them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well now what about the city support for the park system when you were working for it, Jimmie? I know the city was really short of money because tax collections were down in the thirties. Did they still support the Park Commission all right?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I never was in on the budget. They'd just give you so many employees and they'd pay them and you worked them. But the swimming pool -- it was built in the early twenties -- the Municipal Swimming Pool. It held a million and a quarter gallons of water. They've cut it down in size, now, but it was a million and a quarter gallons then. And I was the first manager to ever show a profit.

DR. CRAWFORD: They charged admission?

MR. GRAHAM: Twenty cents for adults and ten cents for children.

And when they first opened, they got so much business you could stay a certain period of time and then you had to go out. They emptied the pool of people and another bunch came in. But that died off, of course. A lot of people didn't have the money then. But we got up an act, my life guards, a comic act, diving. And we put on a show for them. And we'd have a crowd all the way around the outside of the fence, see? But we made eight hundred dollars.

DR. CRAWFORD: Profit?

MR. GRAHAM: In 1932.

DR. CRAWFORD: In the middle of the Depression.

MR. GRAHAM: But that did not retire any bonds. That was

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operating expenses. We made eight hundred dollars over what it cost to operate the pool that year. We didn't pay off any bonds or anything. But I was proud of that. I did the same thing on Beauregard Tennis Courts. I showed a profit on those. But that was very easy to do. You soon learned who the tennis players of Memphis were. And you'd call them. "I have such-and-such a time open. You want it?" And of course, it would inflate their egos--me thinking enough of them to call them. I kept the tennis courts going over there and it paid for all personnel and upkeep of the tennis courts.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was the first time, probably, anyone had done [any] calling to try to book the time.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now while all of this was going on, Jimmie, you were working. You had a job. But a lot of people were out of work. And Franklin Roosevelt, of course, was elected in 1932 and brought in the New Deal in 1933. What was the Depression like? What did you see as it affected people in Memphis?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, you know the poor will always be with us. It's the same difference, back in the Depression as it is now. You still have the same underprivileged. I hate that word underprivileged, because everybody's born with the privilege of being somebody.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they have to take advantage of it.

MR. GRAHAM: Right. But anyway, Mr. Crump started his own relief program.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did that work?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, he put in a man, Aubrey Clapp, who had been an automobile dealer here. His father had been mayor of Memphis at one time. So Aubrey Clapp was made head of the Welfare Department. Well, we had a Blue Law then. No picture shows nor nothing in the State of Tennessee. Mr. Crump decided that you could have picture shows in Memphis so he got it passed in Nashville some way that you could have picture shows in Memphis but the money had to go to charity. So Aubrey Clapp started with a wood yard. Men out of work would cut the wood and then he would have it hauled to their home and so forth for heat. Then every Sunday evening, Aubrey Clapp would make all the picture shows in Memphis to take the proceeds, and Monday morning he'd divvy it out to the welfare recipients. So that was the first that I knew of of any real relief. But it really came in.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well that was a creative approach to it. It didn't get any money from Washington or anything. That got money that people wanted to spend and put it to work.

MR. GRAHAM: It didn't get any money from Washington, state, or city or county. It came from the patrons of the picture shows.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of manager was Aubrey Clapp?

MR. GRAHAM: You want to cut this off and I'll show you a letter he wrote.

[GAP IN RECORDING]

MR. GRAHAM: I'll answer your question now about Aubrey Clapp.

Aubrey was a hard worker. He worked night and day. He was somewhat like me. He had an ungovernable temper. But other than his temper, he meant real well and did the best he could with what he had to work with.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he was in charge of the relief department?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. He was it. He had a couple of ladies that couldn't do anything else. They were not social workers, but they were called social workers.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he did all of that for Memphis, didn't he, until the Federal Government started sending money in.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, actually, I don't know at what point. I know they had food stamps, and then they cut out food stamps. And I remember in about 1964, I got a call to Charlie Baker's office, that's Commissioner Baker of the county, as I was in charge of the Memphis and Shelby County Welfare Department then. And Mr. Baker held up the meeting until I got there. He wanted to know whether the food stamps would help my office and save the county any money. So I just told him plainly, it's according to what the food stamps cost us. And that was it. But they went ahead and voted to bring the food stamps back. That was in the sixties.

DR. CRAWFORD: But in the thirties, the New Deal started bringing in a lot of different relief programs. But what about these wood yards that they had. You mentioned that.

MR. GRAHAM: They were operated by Aubrey Clapp, as far as I

know, and his group.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now how did they operate?

MR. GRAHAM: They would get trees from anywhere they could get them to cut. Like if we wanted one cut, they'd cut it and take it out of there. They had a band saw, I guess you'd call it, and they'd cut them up and make stovewood and firewood out of them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that provided work for some people, didn't it? Work in the wood yards?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And it also provided fuel for poor families, I gather.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. In other words, if you'd go to Mr. Clapp's office, they would give you a grocery order. At that time, for a single person, it was \$7 a week. For a family, the most that any of them could get for a family, if it was \$15 or \$12 or 10, \$15 a week was still as much as you could get for a family. Because you could get a lot of groceries for \$15 a week then.

DR. CRAWFORD: At that time you could.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: But the wood yards were started in Memphis. That was not part of any Federal program that I've heard of.

MR. GRAHAM: No, it wasn't. In fact, we didn't have anybody interfering with Mr. Crump and Mr. Clapp.

[Laughter]

know, and his group.

DR. GRAHAM: Now in this case, it is

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MR. GRAHAM: It is a group.

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(Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, the labor did not cost the city anything.

because there were plenty of unemployed people, I guess, who would work there, in return for fuel.

MR. GRAHAM: Fuel and groceries. They would earn those, which I always thought, a person should earn what he gets. Now somewhere in the Bible it says, "He who refuses to work don't eat."

DR. CRAWFORD: Well that's sort of what they were putting into effect here. They provided work. And people could do it in exchange for relief.

MR. GRAHAM: Well I started that when I came back into welfare in 1961. I started what I called The Big Twenty. Any unemployed able-bodied person who came to our office would have to take a list and make twenty calls. I called it The Big Twenty. It had a short explanation. If this person is willing to work and so forth like that, he would have to make twenty calls a week.

DR. CRAWFORD: Trying to find work?

MR. GRAHAM: Trying to find work. The completed list showed you the firm and who he talked to at the firm, the date, and was signed. If you got eighteen signatures, you got the relief for only 18/20's of the usual. They had to do that to get it. I started out by letting them wash the windows in my building. They had to earn it. I learned that up at Richmond, Virginia. I had been to a conference there and the Commonwealth of Virginia had a deal there where you would work for the city or county two weeks and then they would give you that much money. If



you worked a month, you would get that much money in help or kind. That way, all of the relief people had to work up there if they were able-bodied adults. So I thought I'd put them into washing windows on my building. Say, "You don't want something for nothing, you want to work, don't you?"

The next thing I knew, my welfare commission stopped me. The paper and the public were on me about it. Judge Kenneth Turner still uses it out there, occasionally, I guess. Only he just had ten on his list. He picked it up from me. I guess Kenneth still uses it. But he doesn't have a commission over him. He's elected by the people. But no, they stopped me on that. We could have cut the cost of welfare down.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, they probably came under some federal guidelines, didn't they, after a while, about what could be done?

MR. GRAHAM: We didn't have one cent of federal money, as long as I worked there.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was not federal money, then?

MR. GRAHAM: No sir. City and county. The first year I was there, they had an \$118,000 budget.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year was that?

MR. GRAHAM: 'Sixty-one, when I came back with the city. I left when I went in the Army, and when I came back I didn't go into government. So I came back in '61. But no, it was all our money. In other words, they'd been paying tax on those grocery orders. I refused to pay tax. In other words, I had printed on our grocery orders, "Delivered to:" We were



buying the food for those people.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were a government agency and not subject to tax.

MR. GRAHAM: No federal agency could tell me anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now this system seemed to have worked well, this relief system that was in effect that you saw in the thirties. And Aubrey Clapp seemed like a good manager. Was he a friend of Mr. Crump's?

MR. GRAHAM: His father had been Mayor Clapp of Memphis. And he was always, I guess you could say, a devout Crump man. Yes, Aubrey swore by Mr. Crump.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he do besides the relief? Did he hold other positions in the city?

MR. GRAHAM: No, that was his last job with the city. That was his job until he died. He had held a job previous to that, some kind of marshall. Because I remember when he jumped into a pot of hot mash raiding a still, so Aubrey had been in law enforcement or some branch of government, I don't remember which.

DR. CRAWFORD: In Prohibition times, apparently?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that ended about in '31 or so.

MR. GRAHAM: Thirty-nine. It came back to Tennessee. I know because we all went after spots for our friends of good moral character. Every bootlegger, most of them were Italian. The big bootleggers were Italian. And a lot of the Jewish people went in to get permits to open liquor stores. And I remember 1939 very well, because one of my dearest friends for



years, until his death, was Milos Solomito. (He never was a bootlegger.) In 1939, of course, I was working with him on his prize fights and promotions and stuff like that, so I worked with him and for him. I went down to help set up that liquor store in 1939. I was still with the Health Department, but I went down there and put the prices on everything the night before that liquor store opened at Poplar and High.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did most of the licenses go to Italian families?

MR. GRAHAM: Most of them had been bootleggers. I had one friend that opened up a store. I'm not going to call any names. But he was one of the biggest bootleggers in Memphis. Well naturally, he got a person who was an upright person to get the liquor store license in his name and this guy who's got the liquor store in his name hasn't put a cent into it, but he gets a percentage of the profits. But the bootlegger is operating as a legitimate business.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were the investors, then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Now Milo never was a bootlegger. He was in the pinball machine business. He and his brother, Joe, owned that property at Poplar and High--he and his brother Joe and their family. They owned that property and they thought it would be a good spot for a liquor store. And it was. I don't say all of them -- but a good number of them -- were bootleggers. In fact, I can name you twenty right off the bat that were bootleggers.

DR. CRAWFORD: They did have experience, then.

MR. GRAHAM: In other words, they stayed in it. Some of them still delivered liquor out of the legal liquor stores in Tennessee to Mississippi. I knew one who got killed down there, doing that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who granted the license when they brought liquor back in in '39?

MR. GRAHAM: Well actually, the police chief had a lot to do with it. Now, I don't know about the City Commission... I know the City Commission had to pass on the permits but I don't know whether you just went to the city permit department.

I know you had to get a good bill of health from the police chief, because I remember Chief Seabrook would not give Silvio Solimito a permit to run a wholesale liquor house. Milo was going to buck the big liquor dealers. So I went out and told him -- I was working for Crump -- I told the chief I was working for Mr. Crump. I said, "Why can't my friend Silvio--they called him Tilly -- Tilly Solimito get a license?"

And he said, "Oh, we know it's Milo and Joe's money." A retailer couldn't put it into wholesale.

I said, "Do you want his name or my name? I'll apply for it if you don't, and you don't question where my money comes from." So Silvio got his permit to operate a wholesale liquor store. It didn't do any good. He went broke. He didn't have the brands.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now what do you remember, Jimmie, about the federal relief work in the city in the thirties? You were working in this time, but you saw it going on. The WPA and the

MR. GRAHAM: Is there anything else you want to say?

MR. GRAHAM: I will be glad to answer any question.

stores in Tennessee, and I have been in the stores

down there, and I have been in the stores

DR. GRAHAM: I am not sure, but I think I have

been in the stores

MR. GRAHAM: I am not sure, but I think I have

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PWA, the things like that.

MR. GRAHAM: The Tennessee W.P.A. Department was just state and city. But in 1933, I had just transferred from the Park Commission to the City Health Department. And Alfred Fletcher, our sanitary engineer, pulled everybody, dairy inspectors, swimming pool and water supply inspectors off their job and put them on malaria control. We went through every sewer culvert and ditch in Memphis. I mean you took flashlights and went down through storm sewers. I strained my back, hunting, with a dipper, hunting mosquito larvae. And then they picked up old crankcase oil from all of the filling stations, and took that oil, and we sprayed those ponds. We didn't do it. They had a truck. Mr. Stovall was in charge of the truck. And Mose Yates, who was later acting superintendent of the health department, drove the truck. But we went through there, and then they took the WPA labor and rip-rapped everything through North Memphis. But my job was to go and get easements through these people's property.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year did you transfer to the Health Department?

MR. GRAHAM: Nineteen thirty-three.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why was the change from the Park Commission to the Health Department?

MR. GRAHAM: The Health Department had just drawn an ordinance to supervise some of our public water supply, quasi-public water supply, and swimming pools. They had had a class on that. And I had attended as superintendent of the city swimming pools. I had attended that class and made the highest



grade on it. So Mortimer Crews, Jimmy Crews, they called him J.M. Crews, was swimming pool inspector for the city and he took a job down at the old power plant down at Fourth and Iowa in the engine room. He had been at the University of Tennessee studying engineering, so he went there to study engineering and left the Health Department. So they came out there and offered me the job that paid \$50 less a month than what I was making.

DR. CRAWFORD: Fifty dollars less? Jimmie, why did you take that? Why did you transfer to one that took less?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, the thing was that Bert Parker came out and ate me out. At that time, Dr. Hawley from Quaker Oats was on the Park Commission.

I forget when it took place. But Parker ate me out because Henry Hammond was sitting on the guard post without a bathing suit on. He had on trunks. I said, "Mr. Parker, I'll put those guards out there nude if I want to. I run this d--- pool."

He was with the Park Commission. So he went to the Park Commission and wanted to get my job. Mr. Willingham and Mr. Renfrow and Mr. Fisher told him to stick it. He couldn't do anything with me. Henry Hamond, a blond boy, his shoulders were blistered and bleeding but he had guts. He'd sit out there and work two hours, off a half an hour. Sit out on that guard post in that boiling sun. Sure I let him put salve on his shoulders and not use straps over his shoulders. So I was mad about that.

I never would forget the first morning that I was Swimming Pool Inspector for the Health Department. Dr. Graves offered me the job, Fletcher offered me the job, because I had made the



highest grade on the course. So I went up to the "sewer," we called it. Malone Pool was an old sewer on North Main. They fed chlorine to it by hand. In north Memphis, up there by Mill and Main, I went up there and I was dipping some samples out of the pool and Mr. Parker -- they were having a swim meet -- was up there to award the prizes. He asked me what I was doing, and I said, "I'm checking this d--- pool and I'm going to close it." I just told him it wasn't fit for human beings. And I did the same thing with Washington Park, a negro swimming pool.

DR. CRAWFORD: Closed that one too?

MR. GRAHAM: I closed that one too. Then to show I wasn't partial, I closed the Memphis Country Club.

DR. CRAWFORD: You weren't partial, then. [Laughter]

MR. GRAHAM: Dr. Richmond McKenney went to see Dr. Graves and they called me into Dr. Graves' office and I said, "Yes I closed it. I went back five days straight instead of twice a week, and every time it was highly contaminated."

DR. CRAWFORD: You'd take the water samples in to the lab for testing?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. And Dr. McKinney, was president of Memphis Country Club, "Why these are so-and-so and so-and-so."

I said, "Dr. McKinney, I don't give a d---. Country club members' pee is just as contaminated as the poor folks' pee." And it stayed closed until they put in a chlorinator.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you were not partial. No one could say you were.



MR. GRAHAM: Joe Brennan, by that time, was on the Park Commission, and he told me it stuck in his craw that we closed the city pool. "It doesn't make any difference that it's the city pool, Mr. Brennan," I said, "If you're going to make people sick, it's going to cost us more than the criticism we'll get." And then we got a new pool opened at Malone. A brand new modern pool."

DR. CRAWFORD: At that time, Jimmie, were people still swimming in the Wolf River? Was there a place up there to swim? I know they had earlier.

MR. GRAHAM: There's no desirable place up there to swim. Many people would swim at Raleigh, they used to swim there. They called it Raleigh Springs. But we went all the way down to Olive Branch and inspected that pool. They asked for it down in Mississippi, and so we inspected that pool in Mississippi.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know the one you're talking about. They brought in sand from Florida.

MR. GRAHAM: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is it Maywood?

MR. GRAHAM: Maywood. But we inspected it.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they had to ask you because you had no jurisdiction in Mississippi?

MR. GRAHAM: Right. But they kept a clean pool. We even took samples of the sand. You couldn't find any high bacteria count in there at all. But we got a new pool at Malone by closing the sewer there. We got a modern pool. But I was still the villain. That's the reason Dr. Graves put me on things



like that. He knew I wouldn't back off because somebody called. Just like when I threatened to cut the city water off to Baptist Hospital.

DR. CRAWFORD: When was that and why did that happen, sir?

MR. GRAHAM: Well in our ordinance, it gave everybody five years to bring pools and water supplies up to a standard. It was all after this amoebic dysentery outbreak in Chicago. I went up to Chicago. Dr. Graves sent me up there, and I worked with the Cook County Health Department there checking for back-siphonage from the sewers. I got the idea and went out and saw a demonstration and saw cross-connections and I came back to Memphis with the idea of breaking cross-connections. So Mr. Fletcher, being an engineer, designed a thing to break a vacuum. It went up like this and had certain valves. I told Baptist Hospital management to put in a cross-connection breaker between the city water supply. They had their own well. George Sheats was a good friend of Commissioner Davis.

DR. CRAWFORD: Clifford Davis?

MR. GRAHAM: Clifford Davis. He was a city commissioner. And he was a good friend of Sheats. So Sheats told me he wasn't going to put in any golden valves. I said, "Mr. Sheats, I worry about your sick people, but we'll still have fire protection." And I said, "You can buy distilled water where you want to." But I said, "I'm shutting you down off of city water." I said, "You want me to shut you down now or do you want some time?" I said, "I'll give you thirty days." I didn't have anything to back me at all. I did take C.M. Gooch into court and

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Arnold Klyce into court.

But anyway, Sheats called Cliff Davis and Cliff Davis called me and said, "Oh, let it go."

I said, "Mr. Commissssioner, if you want to take the responsibility for it, fine. Write me a letter ordering me." Because he had nothing to do with me. I was working under Mayor Overton. He couldn't do anything. I said, "Order me to do it by letter."

DR. CRAWFORD: He didn't want to put it in writing, did he?

MR. GRAHAM: He wouldn't put it in writing, because it was going to the Press-Scimitar, and he knew it.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was good you had friends in the press.

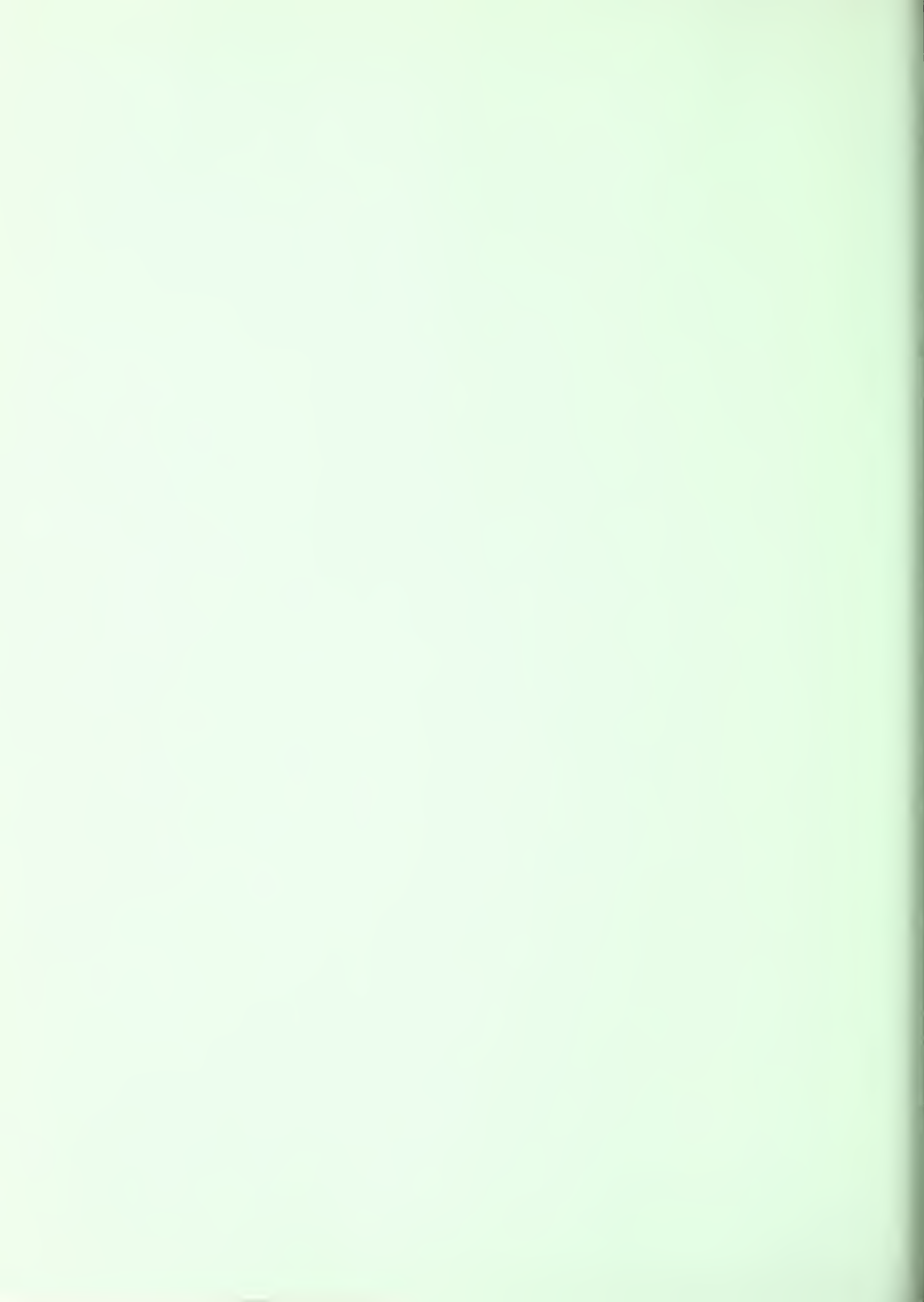
MR. GRAHAM: So we got the valves put in at the Baptist Hospital.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Dr. Graves always backed you up, didn't he?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. He knew what he was doing. If he told me to go out and do something, I'd go out and do it, because I knew that he wouldn't let me get hurt.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you know, it's worth a lot to have someone to work for you can count on, as it is to have someone doing your work you can count on. You had a good relationship with him, didn't you?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. In fact, Marvin Carter and I went out and built swings in his back yard on Barksdale on our own time. We went to the junkyard and obtained old 2" pipes and we built swings for his children on our own time. But he was a good guy. Never got excited about anything.



THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "MEMPHIS DURING THE CRUMP ERA." THE DATE IS MAY 26, 1988. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. JAMES O. GRAHAM. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. ALSO PRESENT IS MAJ. BEN SCHULTZE. TRANSCRIBED BY J. DOUGLAS SIMS. INTERVIEW III.

DR. CRAWFORD: Jimmie, today let's talk about what happened in 1933 and after (because last time we talked about your life in the early thirties) from the time that you got married and did work for the parks. Let's talk today about your service with the Health Department. Why did you make the change? Why did you go to the Health Department?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, to be frank with you, one of the members of the Park Commission and I didn't see eye-to-eye. So actually, I took a \$90 a month cut. I talked it over with my mother and my wife. I told them we were going to be hurt some, but I just didn't like Mr. A.L. Parker. I just didn't care for him. I had taken a class in swimming pool operation at the Health Department. I made the top grade on it. So when Dr. L.M. Graves wanted somebody to take over Jimmy Crews' place -- Crews was leaving the Health Department--he had the job of swimming pool and quasi-water supply inspector.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was inspector of that, wasn't he?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. In those days, the head of a section was called a sanitary technician. In those days, the

Sanitation Department was the preventative medicine department for the Health Department and was not the garbage crew.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your terms were different then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So we were called sanitary technicians. And I was in charge of swimming pools and quasi-public water supplies.

DR. CRAWFORD: Those things were important. A lot of Memphis' health problems had come from water in the early days, until they finally got the better system in.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, on the swimming pools, we inspected the several city pools and the ones owned by the various clubs and so forth. And then Maywood asked us to inspect their pool down at Maywood. And they passed an ordinance, anything built within five miles of the city limits came under our supervision. So we picked up Clearpool and Rainbow Lake.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know where Maywood is because it's still in the same place, isn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was Rainbow Pool, then?

MR. GRAHAM: Rainbow Pool was on Lamar. All three of them were on Lamar.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Clearpool was at Winchester and Lamar, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Corner of Winchester and Lamar.

DR. CRAWFORD: That stayed quite a while.

MR. GRAHAM: There's a nightclub there or something.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know when Maywood was built?



MR. GRAHAM: Clearpool was built in 1932. Yes, let's see.

That was when I was manager of the municipal swimming pool. That's when Joe Garavelli came out to see me, when they were building his pool. He was the owner of Clearpool. He lived next to his grocery store at Winchester and Lamar. And Maywood was open then, so I'd say in the early thirties or late twenties.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a popular form of recreation, then, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, where was Rainbow Lake located?

MR. GRAHAM: Rainbow was built -- you know where the farmer's market is on Lamar?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. Further in town.

MR. GRAHAM: Further in town. Just southeast, it would be.

On the same side of the street, right next to the farmer's market. The funny thing is Italian people who had some connections with illegal whiskey built both of those pools.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a new form of business and it was a very popular business, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Well, Garavelli sold a lot of sugar and corn. [Laughter] But Bellanti ran the Tri-State Cafe, which had about fifteen automobiles and delivered corn whiskey.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you spell his name, sir?

MR. GRAHAM: B-E-L-L-A-N-T-I. Edilo Bellanti.

Everybody called him Bill Bellanti, but Edilo was



his name. E-D-I-L-O.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you inspected those pools. Did they have a big clientele? Did they do a lot of business then?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, you couldn't get in Clearpool or Rainbow Lake either one, over the weekend.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a very popular form of recreation, then. And times have changed more to home swimming pools and things like that.

MR. GRAHAM: Maywood was the same way. People would take picnic lunches and eat out there on the sand.

And they went out there, would take the drinks and food out there and just make a day of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was opened at about the same time, the late twenties or thirties. And it was new when you started, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Comparatively new. Because I know we had just started inspecting it when I took over that job.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now what other water supplies did you inspect besides the swimming pools?

MR. GRAHAM: All semi- or quasi-public water supplies. The Peabody Hotel, the Gayoso Hotel. All of them had their own wells and their own water. Baptist Hospital. There was around a hundred and fifty of them to start with.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's news to me, Jimmie. I had no idea there were still that many private wells not part of the Memphis artesian system then.



MR. GRAHAM: There was then. Now they've closed them all out.

Actually, they had to get a permit from our department. Lane-Central, Mr. Watson from Whitehaven, and several other firms drilled wells.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that Mr. Hale?

MR. GRAHAM: No, Watson. There were three major contractors then, Layne-Central, a company which I should remember. There were two brothers on North Second Street. Carloss Well Supply Company and Layne-Central and Watson were the three major well-drillers.

DR. CRAWFORD: They must have done a lot of business then.

MR. GRAHAM: They did. About twice a year they had to pull the lines up at the Claridge Hotel and work on it.

Carloss always worked on the Claridge well. There was a manhole cover on the sidewalk and the well pumped right into a water tank under it. I would go by there nearly every day to see if that manhole was sealed properly so that the water couldn't go into the tanks where the people would drink from it.

Now at the Baptist Hospital they had an underground tank and it wasn't sealed from anything and they got contaminated water in there and so I cut them off of their cross-connection. They had a cross-connection there with the city water where they could go from one to the other. So I cut them off of city water.

I think I told you previously about one of the commissioners telling me not to make them put in a breaking valve. But Alfred H. Fletcher was, by the way, an MIT graduate in engineering, a brilliant man, and fifty years ahead of Memphis. We're still behind

MR. GARDNER: There is a...

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Fletcher's ideas on sanitation and preventative medicine. He left here and went to Johns Hopkins as an associate professor of preventative medicine. Later he was the sanitary engineer of the State of New York and then he went over to the State of New Jersey. Well Fletcher, he was a little man with a big voice, as one of his disgruntled people said, but he was the originator of the Auto-Chlor. It's used for washing dishes. He produced the engineering plans and a mechanic from the Ford Motor Plant designed the equipment. Jimmy Robinson, who was the late Mr. Jim Pidgeon's son-in-law, obtained the plans from Mr. Fletcher and the mechanic and started Auto-Chlor. They got the name because it dispensed chlorine. They bought the mechanic out. Fletcher didn't participate financially in it at all.

Do you know where the first Auto-Chlor System (sanitation in dish-washing) was installed in Memphis? Foppiana's at Third and Jefferson. They put one down there on trial. And it was probably the most unsanitary place in Memphis. Fletcher talked them into letting them put it in and it worked. You'd have to take dishes through three complete waters. That's before they had automatic dishwashers in Memphis and everything. Fletcher was the daddy of that. Same thing on mosquito control. Same thing on semi-public water supplies. He designed a system to seal wells, well casings by double casing and forcing concrete between the casings. You pump that concrete down between the casings. The first one in Memphis was at Lowenstein's. (Main and Monroe) I supervised that installation.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that so that you did not have outside drainage



into the water?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. But, now we found out that one of the smaller lumber companies, which was well known because the owner was giving money to Southwestern and many other worthy causes, C. M. Gooch, was giving his employees drinking water from a twenty-foot hand-driven water pump. So I had him arrested. I told him to break that water line and run a city line for drinking.

I had the same thing at the old White Rose Laundry. They had an open water tank and the people were drinking water from it. So I never will forget -- I had them both arrested. And Mr. Gooch's trial was in the Mayor's office. And he wanted to know where all of his taxes were going. I never will forget the city attorney. The city attorney said, "They're going to help pay our salaries." [Laughter] So anyway, we made Gooch run the city water line in there for drinking water. We had a malaria/mosquito inspector to go out there and inspect the lumber yard. He had big fire barrels all around his lumberyard with standing water in them, and they'd dip it out in case of a fire, or put a pump in there. We found mosquitos in every one of them. So we had to make him do something about that. He made me angry. We really got on Mr. Gooch. And then the other fellow, I never will forget him in court, Arnold Klyce owned the White Rose Laundry.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who owned it?

MR. GRAHAM: Arnold Klyce. K-L-Y-C-E. His family still owns the White Rose Laundry, but it has been moved. It used to be on Madison. Later it became Hurbult Cleaners, there on



Madison. He was giving his employees at the laundry water from a shallow well with an open tank. So I told him he was going to have to quit using it for drinking, that he could use it for his laundry, as far as I was concerned, but as far as people drinking it, he was going to have to put in a city drinking water line. We would not allow him to cross-connect that in any way with the city. So I gave him a week and then I gave him a month and he still didn't do anything, so I took Marvin Carter, the man that made those pictures of the dump for me. I took him out there and we got pictures of pigeons sitting on that water tank crapping in it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was drinking water there.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So I pulled him into court and he went before the court and he pleaded that it was unjust and he said, "Bringing me up here like a common criminal in a patrol car and everything."

And the old judge said, "Well, you are a common criminal. Mr. Graham here has sworn out a warrant for you."

So he said, "Give me until Monday and I will have that well disconnected and city water run in."

So the judge asked me, "Is that okay with you?"

And I said, "All we wanted to do was give those people decent drinking water."

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was the judge?

MR. GRAHAM: He was a red-headed judge and I think his name was Philby.

DR. CRAWFORD: Philby, yes.



MR. GRAHAM: I believe that was his name.

DR. CRAWFORD: So they were enforcing the health laws then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So I went out there and do you know, from

Friday afternoon at a two o'clock court to Monday morning -- I'd go to work at eight o'clock and I was out there at eight o'clock Monday morning and he was running that city line in there. We got it in there. We got our valves up at the Baptist Hospital, where they didn't want to put it in and went to the commissioner. And you know, I told you that I told him to write me a letter ordering me not to do it. So we did enforce it. I remember when Mac Craddock--W.M. Craddock--was a chief food inspector and they passed a rule that you had to paint a kitchen a certain color so that you could see dirt that was there in the corners and you had to paint the dining area certain colors.

DR. CRAWFORD: In restaurants?

MR. GRAHAM: In restaurants. Craddock closed the Stockyard Hotel's restaurant. Old Cap Laughter ran it and he was quite a politician in Fort Pickering then.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now I've heard of him. Cap... What was his first name?

MR. GRAHAM: Cap Laughter. L-A-U-G-H-T-E-R.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was in one of Mr. Coppock's books.

MR. GRAHAM: Old Cap couldn't read or write. The funniest thing that ever happened to him -- this is supposed to be a true story. It was relayed to me by Mike Mulrooney who was a ward heeler for Cap out there. And he said Cap liked to died. He hollered, "Boys, come on. Let's get our guns. We're

going to Alabama." He said, "The wops are taking Alabama." The headline in the Press Scimitar, I think it was, said, "Italians take Albania."

DR. CRAWFORD: That was in the nineteen-thirties.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Yes. He said, "The Wops are taking Alabama." So he was ready to go to war. Cap ruled out there and if you had a picnic in old Jackson Mound Park, which is DeSoto Park now. . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: They called it Jackson Mound then?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, it was Jackson Mound then. Of course, you had those Indian mounds with the graves out there. He'd furnish all of the barbeque and watermelons and everything. He ran a bootleg place down there at the Stockyard Hotel and all of the stockmen who would come to the stock auctions used his hotel. They had an open bar. He ran an open bar there when Prohibition was here. Instead of seats he had saddles.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was the man who told you that story? Mike someone?

MR. GRAHAM: Mulrooney.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mike Mulrooney.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he was in the political organization here then?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. You take the Twelfth Ward. He was one of the ward heelers from the Twelfth Ward which runs from Florida Street west to the river and took in a whole section of Fort Pickering.

DR. CRAWFORD: That had a lot of white residents then, didn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. It's funny the way it was. You take where we lived, at the corner of -- they call it Crump Boulevard now, but it was Iowa then. I still say I-O-Way. I don't say I-O-Wah. Iowa and Florida. We lived above the drugstore near the viaduct on Iowa. Three bridges cross there at a big hill. And on the south side of it, from Florida Street next to the drugstore, it was all black. And then across the street, on the north side, every residence was white. And from the next block, from Florida to Arkansas, was all white. But then it went on to Louisiana and went about four or five blocks it was all white. But then you got down from Florida to Illinois it was all black until you got to Pennsylvania Avenue. So it was kind of mingled.

DR. CRAWFORD: Sort of a checkerboard pattern, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: It was that way. I know that it had been for the black customers in our drugstore. Most of them were I.C. Railroad employees, and they ran credit with us. If it hadn't been for them, we couldn't have stayed in business.

DR. CRAWFORD: What ward was that?

MR. GRAHAM: Twelfth.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, the Twelfth Ward. What might Mike Mulroony's duties have been in the ward there? He gave service of some kind to the people there, helped them with problems, did he?

MR. GRAHAM: He had one lot, about as big as my lot. He was what you'd call a bondsman. He'd have that lot put

up on fifty cases. [The lot was] probably worth three hundred, four hundred dollars in those days. He'd have a number of people out on that one piece of property. He ran his business out of his hip pocket because he didn't want to pay for his license as a bondsman. In fact, he went to work for the Health Department and worked under me for a while. That's when I got my stories from Mike. But, my goodness, he wasn't going to work because he knew Mr. Joe Boyle would put him to work and he knew I couldn't fire him.

I remember when I inspected Booker T. Washington School. Later I took on picture shows and schools. I had picture shows and schools when I left the Health Department and they I gave Mac Craddock my place after I resigned.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you were inspecting the schools and picture shows?

MR. GRAHAM: What I did, I made a survey of them. They gave me two employees and no one would work a black employee but me. So I had one. I was very fond of him. He was good. He was the best-educated man in the Health Department besides Mr. Fletcher and the two doctors. Robert Lee, they called him "Roundhead " at LeMoyne.

I also had a young college student named John Brewer. He later became an Army Engineer, and became a general in the Army. John could take a clipboard and sit here and just draw this room, I mean to scale. So we went in every city school, and Whitehaven at Mr. Hale's own request, and checked the lighting, ventilation, and water. I told you about making them run a water line from the



ground up to the third floor at Central High School at one of our earlier interviews. But we went in there and Mike would take one end of a tape and Robert Lee, the black man, the other end and they would measure. And then we checked the glare on the blackboards. In fact, we had fluorescent light put in the first two schools in Memphis. They were poorly lighted and they were getting glare. I condemned every drinking fountain in some schools in Memphis.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was their problem? What was wrong?

MR. GRAHAM: Students were sucking water out of them. They didn't have a guard over them and it didn't come out at a slanted fountainhead. They weren't approved drinking fountains. I never will forget, I went down to the school board and told them they were going to have to put in drinking fountain heads. And they said it just galled them, me telling them what to do. And my good friend was superintendent of the schools, Ernest C. Ball. But they didn't like me telling them what to do, but they did it. Springdale, and Hamilton High Schools were the first two schools with fluorescent lights. We improved the lighting in some to where it wouldn't ruin their eyes. We actually checked out everything that would pertain to health that we knew of in those days. We got it on paper where it should be corrected whether it was corrected or not.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well a lot of that had never been done before, had it?

MR. GRAHAM: They didn't have a blueprint on only about three or four schools in Memphis. We had to draw every



classroom in Memphis. John Brewer would put the windows in and everything and even the desks. We would give the City School Board a copy of it. They actually didn't have a blueprint or drawing of many of the schools. That was from 'thirty-five to 'forty-one, when I left the Health Department.

DR. CRAWFORD: There are a lot of things now that we take for granted, like sanitary drinking fountains and light students can see by. And you didn't realize that they didn't always have it.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, just like on the air conditioning. Anything over a variance of ten or twelve degrees from outside is detrimental to your health. It lowers your body temperature too much. When they put in the well at Lowenstein's, for instance, we kept telling them, "There's too many people getting on sick leave." Well, it was about fifteen degrees between inside and outside temperature. They didn't want to cut down because they were drawing people to the store.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that the first air-conditioned store in Memphis?

MR. GRAHAM: In Memphis, yes. I said, "Well, the only thing I can do is tell your employees to wear long underwear." That's the only thing I could think of, if you're going to have it too cold in there. But I shut off the air conditioning at the old Warner Brothers Theater. Howard Waugh was the manager. I shut the air conditioner off.

DR. CRAWFORD: What theater was that?

MR. GRAHAM: Warner Brothers.

DR. CRAWFORD: The temperature was too low?

MR. GRAHAM: You would come in from outside in front of the theater and and you'd freeze to death. I had a sling psychrometer. I took the temperature and checked it on other conditions in there and I told the maintenance engineer to cut the air conditioning off. He raised hell about it. I said, "Well, you're going to have to get within a ten to twelve degree range or else you can't run it." I didn't have an ordinance or rule on it.

DR. CRAWFORD: They did not have an ordinance or anything on that?

MR. GRAHAM: No, no. They didn't have an ordinance on it or anything. They just said it was under our supervision. You had to always make up the rules to get along.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that was a departmental rule.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. That's the reason Dr. Graves, when he wanted anything done, he'd give it to me. If he wanted it perfect, he gave it to Marvin Carter, because Marvin took his time. I went ahead. I made a lot of mistakes, but I wasn't overruled too many times.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, when you went into court with it, you had the law on your side.

MR. GRAHAM: But I remember, the Princess Theater. Oh, that was a filthy thing. Mr. Fletcher figured out a ratio. To the capacity of the theater you had so many toilets or urinals or so forth. We started enforcing that, making them put them in. In fact, they had a balcony for colored people, they



called them in those days. Black people you call them now. They just urinated and everything else on the floor. There were no toilet facilities up there. And you take even at Warner Brothers, a modern theater at that time, the motion picture operators kept a can in the motion picture booth. And I remember one on Mississippi Boulevard, the Lebovitz brothers owned it and the one on Florida Street.

DR. CRAWFORD: Which one?

MR. GRAHAM: Lebovitz. They owned one on Florida Street across the street from the Wabash Screen Door Company and one at Georgia and Mississippi. I forget the names of them now, but they owned two. The operator in the projection booth had to go outside the building and climb a stepladder, just a ladder, to get to the booth. Well naturally he didn't come down to go to the restroom. So I told them they had to do something about that. And Abner Lebovitz was discussing the problem with me and said, "Look there." It was a big building with two stories next door--a big brick building--and people lived above the businesses there. "You see that," he said. "I've been watching it, and I think they're running a house up there."

I said, "What are you going to do, make them move?"

"Hell no, I'm going up on the rent."

We were up there. I was showing him what he'd have to do to get clean. Well, I had no training for this. It just takes common sense. The big shows had two operators--but the small shows just had one. And there were some others who would start a film --- you take a western. Black people really liked westerns. I



do too, but I mean you could take a western and they'd go to it. Well, the shows on Saturday were started at eleven and closed at eleven. Twelve hours. That was the longest that licensed union operators would work. So to make it come out even, eleven to eleven, they would start a western right in the middle of the thing, reel five, maybe, instead of one. Then we decided we'd check the crowd. If I found some places that I thought were overcrowded, where they were standing in the aisles or sitting in the aisles, I'd call the fire department.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was under their rules?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. I'd call the fire department. I remember down on Beale Street one time, Robert Lee, the fellow that worked with me, Robert said, "Mr. Graham, I don't want you going down there on Saturday."

I said, "They have to be made on Saturday, and they've got a lot of improvements to make and I just have to make them, that's all."

And so he said, "If you go, I go."

I said, "You don't have to work on Saturday afternoons. You're off."

He said, "I'm going with you." Because shows didn't open until eleven o'clock. That was just on Saturday. The suburban shows, didn't open in the day anytime during the week, only on Saturdays and Sundays. You couldn't make them. But Warner Brothers, Loews and other downtown theaters could be inspected after 11 a.m. during the day. So, I remember one night they were sitting in the aisle. It was really crowded at the New Daisy.

The Old Daisy and the New Daisy were right up the street from each other. The New Daisy had just been built and they were crowded. So I stopped the show and asked them to get out of the aisles. I said, "They'll give you a refund at the door." I said, "Maybe they'll run a late show for you. I don't know. But you're going to have to get out of the aisles. It's a fire hazard. Somebody is going to get killed if we have a fire." Some of them started talking back to me. Everybody around here knew Robert Lee.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was concerned about your safety.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So "Roundhead" came up and said, "Mr. Jim
said for you to move and we expect you to move."

And they moved. Everybody knew him as a football player and an athlete and everything. They moved when Robert Lee told them to move. You know, he went on to be a great football coach.

This is interesting. The city started a white inspector at \$120 a month. They would start the black inspectors at \$80 a month.

DR. CRAWFORD: For the same work?

MR. GRAHAM: For the same work. Robert, a college graduate, couldn't make enough income. Vint Lawson was with Spaulding Sporting Goods Company as manager. Later he and Red Cavette and Vint bought the Spaulding store. When he and Red bought it, they called it Lawson-Cavette. So I asked Vint. I said, "Vint, who is selling equipment to the black teams?"

He said, "We don't have much business with them."

I said, "I've got a good salesman for you." So we bargained



on the price. He agreed to give Robert twenty percent and I agreed to let him off from work. I didn't have the authority to do it, but I let him off anyway to referee and sell sports equipment. He refereed at Humbolt, Moscow, and the black schools all through West Tennessee. At the same time he was selling athletic equipment. So he supplemented his salary. He always gave the time off back to the city by working nights, Saturdays and Sundays.

DR. CRAWFORD: The city was paying him less for the same work than white people.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So Harry, the late Harry Sharpe, and I would go down to this funeral home, black funeral home, down at Georgia and Mississippi, every Tuesday night, and we'd go through the mechanics of football officiating. Harry knew the rules without having a book. I mean he was astute. And he would discuss the rules and I would act them out. We were meeting with the black football officials. And incidentally, I think I told you before that when they started dropping the handkerchief...

DR. CRAWFORD: The black officials?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. They put a shot in the corner of a handkerchief and it stuck where he threw it. They were lucky they didn't hit some player in the eye.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know where that came from.

MR. GRAHAM: Well that was the first time that I'd ever heard of it and I'd seen pro football games and everything else before that. I would throw my cap down to mark

out of bounds or the spot of a foul and just take my cap off. But that's the first time I've ever seen an official carry a handkerchief.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's interesting, that it started there.

MR. GRAHAM: Then Robert got the job as Coach at Booker T.

Washington High School and talked to Elder Hunt, the principal, and Mr. E.C. Ball with City Board of Education for him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Blair T. Hunt?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, Blair T. Hunt. We got to be pretty good

friends. I've got a letter from his widow to Elder Graham for coming to his funeral. But if I was near Booker T., or down in that district, I'd eat lunch with him in the cafeteria, stuff like that. We were pretty good friends. So I talked to him about Robert Lee getting that job as coach. Then Robert moved to Southern College in Louisiana and stayed there as coach and athletic director until he died. He was good. He would write me a note and tell me about officiating down there, stuff like that. I guess I started black people -- well, we had a couple of black nurses -- in any department in the city other than a porter or laborer. I started the blacks as inspectors the same way in the Memphis and Shelby County Welfare Department. I'm the first one that ever hired a black woman as a social worker.

DR. CRAWFORD: You worked with a good deal of integration, then.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, that's the thing. Down on Iowa I used

to eat at James Lee Lewis' house, neck bones and corn bread, as much as I did in my mother's kitchen. Also at Jim



Sanders' house, he had a moving company and I ate with the black people. I treated them as human beings and they treated me as a human being.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think you were an exception for the time, Jimmie.

MR. GRAHAM: My dad was good to them. In fact, Willie Levert and Larry, he brought Larry from Alabama with him and Willie lived at home in what we called the butler's pantry. We had a butler's pantry when we lived on Stafford. Daddy was good to them. He gave them money. If they didn't do something, he took his belt and had a talk with them, just like he did me. He whipped me too. But he'd whip them. But they'd come up and say, "Mr. Graham, I need so-and-so and so-and-so." He was paying them well, but he didn't pay any attention to it. He'd give them the extra money and stuff like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well what about the Twelfth Ward? You knew that pretty well. How was that run? What were Mike Mulroony's duties there?

MR. GRAHAM: To see that the vote got out. That's all.

DR. CRAWFORD: And in the meantime, did people come to him for help if they had problems?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, and he'd go to Mr. Joe Boyle who was custodian of the courthouse, but they gave him some fancy name, but he was custodian of the courthouse before he became commissioner.

DR. CRAWFORD: And then Chief of Police.

MR. GRAHAM: Now Joe Boyle was never Chief of Police. No, he went from custodian of the courthouse. He named



several chiefs of police.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now was this Joe Boyle, B-O-Y-L-E?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was the chief of police they called Holy Joe Boyle?

MR. GRAHAM: That was Commissioner Boyle.

DR. CRAWFORD: Oh, he was commissioner but not chief?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: I was thinking he was chief.

MR. GRAHAM: I'm trying to think now. You had Seabrook and then Jim McDonald, and it got to be where they were going to put, well, Jim McDonald wanted to go in and Joe Boyle wanted to put Buddy Dwyer in as Chief of Police. So they made a compromise and put another guy who later became sheriff in as chief of police. And then McDonald got it later. I'm trying to think who followed Seabrook. That was a political appointment. He didn't know anything about law enforcement. But you take Jim McDonald and Buddy Dwyer, they were tough. I'm trying to think of the fellow who got electrocuted who was sheriff. Reaves. They put him in as Chief of Police in that compromise. And then they moved him from Chief of Police to Sheriff. He was Sheriff when Mr. Crump died.

DR. CRAWFORD: Reaves?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Mr. Hines came in later? Sheriff Hines?

MR. GRAHAM: Sheriff Hines was much later than that, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Crump died in 'fifty-four.



MR. GRAHAM: No, let's see. He died in 'fifty-five, didn't he?

DR. CRAWFORD: I'm not sure. We can check it. But it was somewhere in the middle of the fifties. I know it was in October, though.

MR. GRAHAM: I know it was in October because I was on the jury in a murder case. A Mexican had killed his girl friend on McLemore Avenue. Sam Campbell was the judge. Well, I used to let my secretary do Sam Campbell's work when he was County Register. He went to night school and became a judge. But he was a motion picture operator before that. He did that on Saturdays and Sundays.

But Sam was the judge in this criminal court trial and I was on the jury. I thought possibly he would let me off the jury because I knew personally both the prosecutor and the defense lawyers. I knew all three of them. I had insurance on the defendant's lawyers. I had insurance coverage on both of them. So I thought the judge would let me off the jury anyhow. But they asked me if I was prejudiced against Mexicans. I said, "No, two of the best friends I had in basic training in the Army were Mexicans." I said, "They kept my suit pressed and brought me Mexican food." They had their wives in the community out from the camp. I said, "They're two of my best friends. Jessie and Ignatio Gomez." I said, "I have nothing against them." Then they asked me another question. So Jim Galloway -- Ike Clinton and Jim Galloway were the defendant's lawyers and Williams was the prosecutor -- they all laughed and said, "Jimmie, you're stuck."



[Laughter]

DR. CRAWFORD: So you were on the jury.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, I was on the jury.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that's where you were when Mr. Crump died.

MR. GRAHAM: That was after he died. I thought they would let me off and then I could have told them this, that I was helping settle his estate. What I meant by that, he had a bunch of papers up in his private office on the fifth floor.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Crump did?

MR. GRAHAM: Big boxes. One of my jobs was to go through all of those boxes. Well, I went through there and found an insurance policy with New York Life for \$5,000 which he bought in 1925. And it was rated on account of a heart condition.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well my goodness. And no one knew that, I guess?

MR. GRAHAM: If they did, they didn't let it be known. He paid more premium on that policy from 1925 --he died in 1954.

DR. CRAWFORD: For around thirty years, then, he had that and lived with it.

MR. GRAHAM: But he paid more premium on the policy than the face value of the policy. He paid more than \$5000 premium on a \$5000 policy.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because of that rating?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. But, no, the reason I get back and say it was 'fifty-six when he died, my younger brother moved to Honolulu in 1954. They came back to visit in 1955, after



a year. And Mr. Crump died the next year.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you helped with the papers. Why did you do that, Jim? Why were you selected?

MR. GRAHAM: When I came back from the Army, I went to work for Crump.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were in his company, then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, I was telling my wife about

it the other day. Mr. Crump never drew his social security. He said he didn't need it. He paid it but he never collected it. So attorney John D. Martin, Jr. who is Lewis Donelson's cousin, by the way. The "D" in "John D." is for Donelson. But John D. Martin, Jr. suggested that Mrs. Crump go ahead and draw it. So to prove her birth, I had to take the McLean Bible, her family Bible, and it was about that thick.

DR. CRAWFORD: In other words, about a foot thick.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. And I had to take that Bible, to prove

her birth, to the social security office, which was down on Second then, it was before the Federal Building was built. So I started out of the office building at Main and Adams and it was raining. I didn't do a thing but take my raincoat off and wrap that Bible. I wasn't about to let that Bible get wet.

DR. CRAWFORD: But you got wet.

MR. GRAHAM: I got soaked. But I didn't get that Bible wet.

Mrs. Crump said she didn't wish to draw social security benefits. She didn't need it. I said, "Mrs. Crump." Her name was Bessie. I said, "Mrs. Crump," I said, "Why don't you draw it and just give it to me?"



She said, "You're kidding, aren't you?"

I said, "Yes." [Laughter] But she was sweet as she could be.

DR. CRAWFORD: How much longer did she live after he died?

MR. GRAHAM: I can't exactly tell you now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Several years?

MR. GRAHAM: I left Crump in 'fifty-nine, and I think she was still living then. I can't remember going to her funeral. I know I sat up that night before Mr. Crump was buried. He was buried from his home. And I was one of the three asked to spend the night there. And I think I told you before about people would come in the wee morning hours to view the body.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a great crowd, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who were the other two people, Jimmie?

MR. GRAHAM: Tom Yeaglin and I can't think of the third one.

Tom Yeaglin and I. Yeaglin came about the same time I did to work for Mr. Crump--'forty-six. We hadn't been there but about ten years. And some of those old-time employees, they had them parking cars and stuff and we spent the night there. But, no, I can't think of the third one now. It could have been Bud Warner. I don't know. It could have been. He came in 'forty-six, too.

DR. CRAWFORD: S. H. Warner?

MR. GRAHAM: S. H. Warner. He later became vice-president of the company. He was smart. He attended the business school at Pennsylvania--Wharton.



DR. CRAWFORD: Wharton School?

MR. GRAHAM: Wharton School. He was a graduate. They brought him down here to set up Southern American Fire Insurance Company for Crump. Crump owned Southern American Fire Insurance Company outright. And Bud Warner was Mr. Southern American Fire Insurance Company. He was a smart insurance man. He was made the vice president of the company.

I know one thing you'd like to hear about Mr. Crump. During the summer months, it was extrememly hot and there was no central air conditioning in our building. We had a few window units. And of course, he was renting from the North Memphis Savings Bank, which was a branch of Union Planters National Bank. Crump's (the insurance company) bought that building later, after Mr. Crump Sr. died. But he would have Tony the Greek whose real name was Milton Thantillis, who operated the Coffee Kitchen Cafe across the street, make up ten gallons of lemonade and change it twice a day so the employees could drink lemonade.

DR. CRAWFORD: At the Crump Company?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Ten gallons of lemonade twice a day.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. And then he'd have him to serve watermelons.

I don't know where he got the watermelons. I can't remember. But Pete Wilsford, who was the vice president of the company and I didn't eat watermelons.

DR. CRAWFORD: Pete Wilsford?

MR. GRAHAM: Wilsford. W-I-L-S-F-O-R-D. I don't know how he got the name Pete, because there's no "P" in his

name there. They called him Pete Wilsford.

[Side Two]

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was the man across the street who brought the lemonade cart?

MR. GRAHAM: Everybody called him Tony the Greek. He was a Greek, but his name was Milton Thantillis. He was a little roly-poly Greek fellow, and he was a great guy. He'd do anything for you.

DR. CRAWFORD: And in hot weather, then, you had cantelopes, the others had watermelon, and you had lemonade. They didn't have air conditioning then?

MR. GRAHAM: Just a few window units.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now was that the building at Main and Adams?

MR. GRAHAM: One-ten Adams.

DR. CRAWFORD: But that was not bought until later?

MR. GRAHAM: It was not bought until after Mr. Crump died. It was not bought until after I left. Nineteen fifty-nine.

DR. CRAWFORD: I did not know that. I had guessed he owned it earlier.

MR. GRAHAM: He rented it all the time, but he kept it up. He would have it painted. In other words, Aaron Willy, our paint contractor, had a standing order. "Check and if it needs painting and paint it." And Willy would come in when work slowed down and start painting. The funniest thing about that, I

had an Italian boy working with me. He was a World War II pilot, Carl Gargano.

DR. CRAWFORD: Carl Gargano?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. G-A-R-G-A-N-O. Every window in the building had E.H. Crump on it. And this old fellow was lettering the windows. There were very few gold-leaf men left in town, even in those days. I came in and Carl was just dying laughing. And this old gold-leaf man had painted on the window in our office, "E. H. Rump."

"Carl," I said, "Tell that man he's got it wrong and get it off of there. Mr. Crump would kill him!"

DR. CRAWFORD: So you called him back.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Told him he had it wrong. That it should be E.H. Crump. It was "E.H. Crump" and he had "E.H. Rump."

DR. CRAWFORD: And they weren't using much gold leaf at that time?

MR. GRAHAM: Very few gold leaf men. There weren't twenty gold leaf men in town. I'll bet you there's not ten now. It's an art.

DR. CRAWFORD: Things have really changed, haven't they?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. He used to have a big Christmas party for all employees down in the basement. Down in the basement we used to have thirty or forty girls who would just type policies. Well on Christmas Eve, he'd have a big spread down there, and when it was over, people would start drifting out. Some of us were invited to Mr. Crump Sr.'s office, about eight of

us. And he'd talk and he'd tell stories.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had a chance to learn a lot from a really successful person.

MR. GRAHAM: He could tell stories. He used to tell about going to the races. He kept a box over there and when he wasn't going to Hot Springs, he'd let somebody in Memphis use it. But Shifty Logan -- did you ever hear of him?

DR. CRAWFORD: I certainly have.

MR. GRAHAM: Logan Hipps was his name.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the last name?

MR. GRAHAM: Hipps. H-I-P-P-S.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he a boxer at one time?

MR. GRAHAM: One of the best. He was a clown. He'd double-shuffle and run around the ring and bounce off of the ropes and the middle-weight boxers now couldn't hit Shifty with a handful of buckshot. He fought Dempsey in an exhibition match at Warner Theater. Of course, Warner's was a Pantages then --Pantage's Theater. He fought an exhibition with Jack Dempsey and they became life-long friends. But Shifty stayed three rounds with Dempsey and kept the guys laughing. He wouldn't try to hit him. He was going around the country, barn-storming. Dempsey was champion then.

Shifty was a Western Union boy originally. He started hanging around the Winchester arena and they started putting him in the ring. I watched him with a good boxer, he'd beat him to the punch. Shifty was a fireman and then a policeman and it ended up, the last year I was with the city, he was manager of a

garbage truck. He sat in the cab and didn't do any work, but it was his crew, he said.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think I've seen his picture in the paper when he was later in life.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, actually, I kept up with him until he died. He got to be a very good friend of Henry Loeb's. In fact, Loeb's the one that put him on a sanitation truck, a garbage truck. By the way, Henry's the one that changed the name that from the Garbage Department to the Sanitation Department. But he put Shifty on there.

Well Shifty always called Henry "Bigfoot." He called him to his face, "Hiya Bigfoot." Henry called me one day and said, "Shifty's in trouble. Go out and see him. He's in the Baptist Hospital." So I went out to the hospital and somebody had just beat the hell out of him. Of course, he stayed on that bottle pretty well. But Shifty had gotten beaten up pretty bad and I got to talking to him and talking to the nurses and interns. He kept them all amused. I told them who he was.

I said, "He's a personal friend of Jack Dempsey. He's the only man I know in Memphis who can call Jack Dempsey and tell him that he wants to come to New York and he'll wire him a ticket. He was. We brought Jack Dempsey in here to referee a fight. He stopped at the Chisca Hotel, and he wouldn't see a newspaper man until we got Shifty Logan and pal Moore, two of his old-time boxing friends.

DR. CRAWFORD: Pal Moore?

MR. GRAHAM: Pal Moore. Pal Moore was the uncrowned



featherweight champion of the world right after World War I. He lived on the six hundred block of Poplar. He could box. Pal got punch-drunk. But he beat this Frenchman for the championship. They didn't give him the decision. But he out-pointed this Frenchman there-- C-R-I-Q-U-I, I think. But Pal Moore, he'd shadow-box across the street and everything like that. Dressed just like he was out of Esquire all the time. His wife saw that he stayed well dressed. He made a lot of money in boxing and owned the Yellow Cab Company in Chicago, but he wouldn't pay the gangsters off and they turned his cabs over. Kept turning them over. Just to run him out of town.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because he wouldn't pay the gangsters.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And what happened was that Mr. Crump would have you and a few other close friends up and he would talk with you after the Christmas parties.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. He'd tell stories about Shifty and other people like that. I never will forget standing there one time and Crump Jr.'s son-in-law, Steve McLaughlin who's got a son who plays in the movies named John Laughton, now. That's Mr. Crump's great grandson now.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know that. John Laughton.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. But he was telling a story about Shifty, I think I told you about Shifty going over to Hot Springs and Mr. Crump asked him what he was doing there. Well, he told that story, Mr. Crump told that story about Shifty coming to Hot Springs and Big John McLaughlin--McLaughlin's his name -- and

he said, "Is he Logan Hipp's father?"

I said, "Yes. They double-dated. John McLaughlin double-dated with Logan Hipps going to Memphis State."

DR. CRAWFORD: Now your mother was working with Mr. Crump back when he had the saddle company?

MR. GRAHAM: That's right. She was just relieving his regular secretary.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MR. GRAHAM: She took a letter for Mr. Crump one day and he said, "To Mr. Robert Church, so-and-so, Esquire, so forth." And Mother said, "Isn't he a negro?" She probably said, "nigger."

But Mr. Crump said, "Yes."

She said, "You call him 'Mister'?"

Mr. Crump said, "On business letters, he's 'Mr.' Socially, no." That might not be his exact words, but something to that effect. Mother told that. And he always remembered her. He never did forget my mother. Although he didn't know she was my mother when I was hired there.

DR. CRAWFORD: But he found out later.

MR. GRAHAM: I told him later.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well Mr. Crump had a great respect for family.

MR. GRAHAM: Now his two grown sons -- I didn't work there when John Crump was alive. John was killed in an airplane accident. But when he would come into the office in the morning, both boys got up from what they were doing and kissed him. That's the way they greeted him. Even in a business office,

daily.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well they really had a lot of affection and respect for him.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, they loved him. And probably everyone that met him half-way did.

daily.

DR. CHAWFORD: Well they really had a lot of

respects for him.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, they have a high regard for him.

and him his family.



THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "MEMPHIS DURING THE CRUMP ERA." THE DATE IS JUNE 9, 1988. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. JAMES O. GRAHAM. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. ALSO PRESENT IS MAJ. BEN SCHULTZE. TRANSCRIBED BY J. DOUGLAS SIMS. INTERVIEW IV.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Graham, you were an employee of Mr. Crump and I know you also must have had his trust and respect, because when he died, you were one of three people asked to come over that night and sit up with the body, weren't you?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where were you when you got the call about Mr. Crump's death and how did you feel about it?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, we kind of expected it, because a couple of years before that, he was in such a state that he couldn't walk upstairs to his bedroom. They put in a little sliding thing that he rode on.

DR. CRAWFORD: A mechanical lift that he rode on.

MR. GRAHAM: Mechanical, that he could sit on and ride upstairs. It was installed and not many people knew about it. But we had a very fine man, Mr. Shorty Acheson, who went out and had it installed. He worked, he was a real good real estate man and made appraisals. Every company in the United States took Shorty Acheson's appraisals. If he appraised a property for insurance purposes, that was it. He's the one that put in the

lift and it just slipped out to me. I asked Shorty to go to lunch and he said, "No, I have to go out to Mr. Crump's and finish installing that elevator." So that's the way I found out about it.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was Shorty Acheson's name? Do you remember?

MR. GRAHAM: Howard.

DR. CRAWFORD: Howard Acheson. And he had put that in. Did Mr. Crump have heart trouble?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes he did. In fact, he apparently had it back as early as 1925. Because at that time he bought an insurance policy that was rated for blood pressure. So apparently he had had it and watched it very closely.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well he didn't let it stop him, did he?

MR. GRAHAM: Nothing stopped him. I walked down Main Street with him, and he must have had an eighty-four inch stride. I'd have to trot to keep up with him, and mind you, he was over seventy-five then. I was in the late thirties. And I'd have to trot to keep up with Mr. Crump and he'd walk the length of Main Street and back and I'd be panting and he'd still be taking that stride, tipping his hat and shaking his cane and walking and bowing and speaking to people up and down Main Street there. He could really take out. It was almost like jogging to keep up with him when he was walking.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well for someone with heart trouble, he certainly got exercise.

MR. GRAHAM: He did that. He walked fast. In fact, he never drove an automobile. Clint never would bring him



all the way to the office. He'd get out about Dunlap every morning and walk in.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now who was Clint?

MR. GRAHAM: That was his private chauffeur. Clint died recently. Crump Junior inherited him when his daddy died. But Mr. Crump never drove a car. Clint had been with him a long time, -- his wife ran a restaurant out there near Booker T. Washington School, and Clint was one of the family.

DR. CRAWFORD: I did not realize that Mr. Crump did not drive. But he didn't at all.

MR. GRAHAM: He never shaved himself.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did he get shaved?

MR. GRAHAM: At Merchant's Barber Shop on Jefferson. Every morning he'd go by and have a shave.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was that on Jefferson?

MR. GRAHAM: Marchant's Barber Shop was on the north side of the street between Main and Second.

DR. CRAWFORD: And I'm sure they had Mr. Crump on a regular basis there.

MR. GRAHAM: That was Mr. Crump's barber shop. Mr. Marchant, M-A-R-C-H-A-N-T, I believe he may have spelled it, and Mr. Poole were the two barbers. I don't know how long Mr. Crump traded there. In other words, he'd get a shave there, and in fact, he'd do that and he'd generally stop by the Tennessee Club on the way home in the evenings. If Clint was off duty, he'd get one of the junior salesman to drive for him. I know my younger brother worked at Crump before I did and being the newest

All the way to the top of the mountain

morning and evening

DR. LAWRENCE

MR. LAWRENCE

DR. LAWRENCE

DR. LAWRENCE

DR. LAWRENCE

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employee and the youngest and driving a Crump car, he got the call to wait for Mr. Crump. So Bobby, my brother Bobby, would drive Mr. Crump home. Sometimes he'd have a date and still be waiting at eight o'clock for Mr. Crump to come out of the Tennessee Club.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was the Tennessee Club then?

MR. GRAHAM: Same place it is now, at the corner of North Court and Second, you know, North Court, and Second. The northwest corner.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know whether then it was where it is now.

MR. GRAHAM: I guess it's been there a hundred years.

DR. CRAWFORD: Oh, it's an old one. And Mr. Crump would go there often after work?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. He and his old cronies would meet there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he work a full day at the business?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't think Mr. Crump ever worked at the business. He was there every day. He'd come in at certain hours and leave when he wanted to, but Crump, Jr., really started the insurance business. E.H. Crump, Jr. started the insurance business in about 1924. Before that, Stanley Trezevant came to Mr. Crump and wanted to start representing Metropolitan Life Insurance Company for loans. They started a mortgage loan company, Crump and Trezevant, but Trezevant ran it. Mr. Crump put up \$2500 to start it. And then later, he bought Trezevant out and became E.H. Crump and Sons, or E.H. Crump and Company. Crump Junior, about 1924 or 1926, he and Miss Clara Muller, who was his secretary to his death, started the insurance business in a little cubby-hole. E.H. Crump Junior is the one that started the

insurance business and he's the one that ran the insurance business. Other than where politics came into it. And then Mr. Crump kept politics out of the insurance business. There was no insurance in it.

DR. CRAWFORD: In other words, Mr. Crump was handling his own things and Crump Junior was handling the business?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. That's the way it was when I went to work in 'forty-six. Previously, I wouldn't know. But I don't think Mr. Crump ever actively took part in the insurance business at all.

DR. CRAWFORD: He had other things to do, of course. And you started there in 'forty-six. Who hired you for that position, Jimmie? Was that Crump Junior or Mr. Crump?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, my first contact was Cameron Trenor, who was manager of Crump Underwriters, a new company they started in March of 'forty-six.

DR. CRAWFORD: Cameron, what was his last name?

MR. GRAHAM: Tranor. T-R-E-N-O-R. C.C. Trenor. Trenor had been with Crump for a long time, but he left to teach flying over at Blytheville, Arkansas, during World War II. Then Cameron came back and in March they started Crump Underwriters, which was to handle Aviation Life Group Insurance and hospital and medical. They had never had a department for that and aviation was the main line. Cameron, being in the aviation business and everything, just went into that job there as General Manager of Crump Underwriters Co. At that time, it started out as a corporation. Several years later, it ended up as

a partnership. Just the Crump family. Actually, Trenor was handling aviation. He is the one who made the contacts with Lloyd's of London. And they sent, I started to say "Young fellow," but he's not young any more. Crump sent Sid Stewart, whose daddy was President of Old Chicago Southern Airlines, and that was one of our big accounts. So Sid came to Crump's to handle aviation insurance, and they sent him to London to study under Lloyd's of London.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, he went to a good place.

MR. GRAHAM: I know. When Sid went over there, well he was worried about a car and he had just gotten married. He's chairman of the board now. But he was worried about a car and everything. So my younger brother was with Ford Motor Company then and he had him a Ford delivered at dealer's cost in London and Sid used it the whole time he was over there and sold it for more than he paid for it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he came back then...

MR. GRAHAM: He came back to work for Crump and ended up handling the aviation end of it, and finally, he handled the whole shebang.

DR. CRAWFORD: And is now chairman of the board?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where does he live?

MR. GRAHAM: He lives somewhere in Memphis. I don't know exactly where.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, he's not very young now.

MR. GRAHAM: No, but he could be, I'll say in the early fifties,

he couldn't have been over twenty-four or -five years old. But we're talking about thirty or forty years ago. I imagine Sid's in the late fifties or early sixties.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you work down on Adams?

Was that where the place was when you went there?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. It was there for a number of years after I went there. One-ten Adams.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they have room for all of it there, or did you have to move out later?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, it was there when I left in 'fifty-nine.

I worked from 'forty-six to 'fifty-nine. When I left in 'fifty-nine, we were still in the same place. But we had acquired--first we started out just the upper floors of the North Memphis Savings Bank which was owned by Union Planters. Then we took the next building. Then we took the next building, then we took the original fire station. When he'd open up a new department, he'd open up a new thing. We started out with just two floors there and ended up with all five floors of the bank building, see? So that's the way it grew. Under the bank there, in the basement there, when I left they had about sixty girls that did nothing but type policies.

DR. CRAWFORD: That business was really growing, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: When I went there were sixty-five. When I left, it was over a hundred and sixty-five, in twelve years.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's a lot of growth.

MR. GRAHAM: And they had branches, Crump had branches in



several other towns. I never did know too much about them.

DR. CRAWFORD: I did not know that.

MR. GRAHAM: They had several other towns, just like he and Senator McKellar and the late postmaster, Jim Farley, they owned a lot of Coca-Cola stock. In fact, they had the franchise for Coca-Cola in several cities. I know Philadelphia was one of them. I don't recall the rest of them. I never was close to that. But I know they had quite an extensive operation. But Crump operated in various enterprises in about eight states then. Now it's international.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well he was extremely successful, certainly, in what he did. I did not know about his ownership in the various things.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. Actually, he had farms. And when he died, I am told they had to sell a farm in Mississippi, one of the farms in Mississippi, to pay the inheritance, federal tax. They wanted to keep the cash flowing in the active company, you know. But he had extensive properties.

DR. CRAWFORD: I can't remember what year his mother died. Was he still going down to Mississippi in 'forty-six when you worked for him? He used to go down every Sunday afternoon.

MR. GRAHAM: He was going down to Mississippi every week until he died. I'm pretty sure. Because I remember when some of the trees down at the Holly Springs Cemetery were cut down, he had a man who stayed on the payroll, he was supposed to



be a real estate salesman. I can't recall the old gentleman's name, but his main thing to do was to drive Mr. Crump on the weekends down to Holly Springs. Mr. Crump commented one time about the trees in the cemetery.

DR. CRAWFORD: The cemetery at Holly Springs?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. At Holly Springs. So either he cut them or he took somebody and had them cut. He cut some of those trees, branches out of there, and got some publicity. I don't think he got in any trouble. I know I asked him would he cut any trees today and he got mad and told Mr. Crump, and Mr. Crump told me to stay off of him. [Laughter] But I think he kept going down there as long as he lived, I would say.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well he stayed in good health a long time, then, didn't he?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. I remember one time, one Sunday morning, my brother had a friend that had a place down at Moon Lake. And one Sunday morning, three couples of us decided we'd go down there and meet with Word Gidden and do some Sunday-morning fishing instead of going to church.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was down in Mississippi?

MR. GRAHAM: Down in Lulu, Mississippi. So, of course, Word Gidden's place was over on Moon Lake. He had a cabin down there with a Phillipine house man and stuff like that. It was right nice.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who had the cabin at Moon Lake?

MR. GRAHAM: Word Gidden and Dick Worthington. They ran a Ford Agency in Tunica. My brother was with Ford's

wholesale division. It's a funny thing, now. Dick Worthington, a partner in the business with Word Gidden, was a devout Catholic. So one weekend, Word would have his drinking buddies down and the next weekend, Dick Worthington would probably have some nuns down from someplace. That's the way -- they alternated weekends at the place.

DR. CRAWFORD: It fit the audience, then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So one Sunday morning we went down to Lulu, Mississippi. I saw somebody with a big hat and a long overcoat and somebody limping along beside him. And I said, "From the back, that looks like Mr. Crump and Commissioner Andrews, Francis Andrews." It was them down there, before eight o'clock on Sunday morning in Lulu, Mississippi, walking down the middle of the street. I guess he had some property down there or something. I don't know. I think he originally came from Lulu, Mississippi before he went to Holly Springs. I mean he originally started out working as a clerk in a grocery store there. Mercantile store. So maybe he had some property there or maybe he just had some friends there, but he was down there in the early morning hours there in Lulu, Mississippi with Francis Andrews by his side.

DR. CRAWFORD: Francis Andrews. What was his role in the political organization?

MR. GRAHAM: I can say in two words, "Yes, Mr. Crump." Francis actually, was a very valuable follower of Mr. Crump, but Francis couldn't control any votes or anything. In other words, he'd carry out a lot of things. He'd carry the candy



for Mr. Crump when he'd give it to the band members at the prep football games. Mr. Crump would always pass out candy bars to the cheerleaders and bands. But Francis was a loyal follower of Mr. Crump. But he was no administrative giant, I'll say that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he not hold office himself?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, he started out as a County Commissioner and then he became County Register. The job that Guy Bates is on now.

DR. CRAWFORD: The job that Mr. Crump had had before, wasn't it? Hadn't Mr. Crump been Register in the teens for a while?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't know. I know when he was ousted as mayor, I've read or been told that he came back in some position.

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe that was Register for a while. The one Guy Bates has now.

MR. GRAHAM: I'm not sure on that.

DR. CRAWFORD: He didn't stay there very long, but I'm sure that's the one that he held. Francis Andrews worked with the legislative delegation for a while, didn't he? He'd go to Nashville and take care of the bills and things there.

MR. GRAHAM: He was one of the sons of the original Andrews of the Davis-Andrews Grain Mill. That was on Texas, just south of Main Street. Davis and Andrews was on one side of the viaduct at Iowa and John Wade on the other. Davis and Andrews went broke in 'twenty-nine.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, a lot of people went broke in 'twenty-nine.

MR. GRAHAM: Francis Andrews went to bed thinking he was a fairly wealthy man, and he woke up the next morning owing thousands of dollars. I took the last check for ten thousand dollars to Union Planters Bank and picked up his last note when I was working for him there in the 'forties. He finally paid off that whole debt.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, a lot of people had trouble in the Depression. And you ran into them down in Lulu. Mississippi. Mr. Crump travelled a good deal, didn't he?

MR. GRAHAM: Well he went to Battle Creek, (Michigan) religiously once or twice a year.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was for treatment?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I think it was just like Hot Springs. You'd go for a bath. I don't think he went for any particular treatment. I just think he went to Battle Creek because his cronies would meet there or something.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he also went to Hot Springs.

MR. GRAHAM: Whenever the horses were running.

DR. CRAWFORD: I guess that would be in the spring, then. I'm not sure.

MR. GRAHAM: And he went to football games all over the country.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he went to a lot of games here in town, too, didn't he?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. I don't think he ever missed a prep school game in town. Actually, we didn't have the following at Teacher's College that we do at Memphis State, so I

MR. ORRICK, 2nd DISTRICT, NEW YORK.

DEAR MR. ORRICK,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst.

relative to the proposed amendment to the constitution of the State.

I have also the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th inst.

relative to the same subject.

I have the honor to inform you that the committee on the subject of the

amendment to the constitution of the State, have the honor to report to the

assembly, that they are in favor of the adoption of the proposed amendment.

I have the honor to inform you that the committee on the subject of the

amendment to the constitution of the State, have the honor to report to the

assembly, that they are in favor of the adoption of the proposed amendment.

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don't know whether he ever came to any of our games or not. But he never missed a prep school game. I'll guarantee you that. And I remember South Side's band uniforms didn't look good. He told them to get new uniforms. And he saw that they were paid for. He paid for them or merchants of south Memphis paid for them. He could call the merchants and say, "Why not buy a uniform for..." and they'd do it, you know. [Laughter] But they just liked him so well if he asked them, it wasn't through fear. I think they just gave it because Mr. Crump wanted it. They could say, "Well I gave Mr. Crump so much for such things," you see. I think it was that, more admiration for the man because he kept a clean city rather than for fear or anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you here when he stopped horn-blowing in the city, when that ordinance was passed?

MR. GRAHAM: I was here but I don't remember any details about it.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was earlier, I guess.

MR. GRAHAM: No, I think that horn-blowing --
well actually, I don't know when it started. I believe it was when Joe Boyle was commissioner. It was somewhere in the late thirties or forties.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know Joe Boyle was commissioner in the late forties because I know he was commissioner after John Crump was killed in the plane crash and Mr. Crump cleaned up the city. And that was before they opened the Millington Air Base for World War II.

MR. GRAHAM: But I can't remember exactly what year. The first



time I knew Mr. Boyle, he was manager of the Shelby County courthouse. In other words, he was in charge of the clean-up help. And spaces and buying supplies and so forth. That was his job, as well as carrying the ninth ward, handling the votes out there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now let's see. Where was the ninth ward then?

MR. GRAHAM: Out in "Pinch".

DR. CRAWFORD: North of downtown?

MR. GRAHAM: North of downtown.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was Joe Boyle's ward then.

MR. GRAHAM: His territory. He and Dave Wells.

DR. CRAWFORD: And who?

MR. GRAHAM: Dave Wells. Dave Wells, Senior. Dave Wells Junior just retired a couple of years ago after managing the stadium for many years. That's little Dave. His daddy was... Well, he was tax assessor.

DR. CRAWFORD: They called Joe Boyle, at some time, Holy Joe Boyle, didn't they?

MR. GRAHAM: That's when he closed down the houses of prostitution.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was, I guess, the end of the thirties, somewhere along there. Why did he do that? Do you know why he cleaned the city up then?

MR. GRAHAM: Maybe because people were demanding it. Everybody said he wasn't holy, but see, Lindenwood Christian Church was originally Linden Avenue Christian Church at Mulberry and Linden. But you'd park on Mulberry and you couldn't go to

church down there even in the daytime without the prostitutes knocking on the windows and asking you to come in. Even if you were with your wife, they'd knock on their windows and ask you to come in. And if you'd go to the evening service, they almost came out and got you.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mulberry Street was the center of a lot of prostitution, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So maybe there could have been a lot of complaints that he got. I know we really cracked down on them when the Navy base came in Millington. We cracked down on them and my job every morning was to go over to the county jail and the police department and interview these prostitutes. We'd run tests on them and if they had a venereal disease, we sent them to the Penal Farm and had a special house out there for them. They kept them until they were cured.

But I've got some stories of these girls, they just came in over the weekend and I'd have to get the whole dope on them and make a case history on them. I think the Navy coming in here, plus complaints from the citizens and the churches, probably caused Mr. Boyle to take action.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that's when they gave him the name "Holy Joe."

You had to work a lot on weekends because a lot of the arrests were on weekends, weren't they?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, the fact is, I worked a lot of weekends.

Of course, I never took any time off when I was with the county. That was a twenty-four hour job heading the Shelby County Hospital Social Services Department which handled



the mental patients, the aged and the tuberculosis patients, The Shelby County Hospital and also crippled children. So one didn't have much time off. I worked under Commissioner Andrews, and he would always let me off to referee a football game or officiate at a football game, or Dr. Graves would, because they knew I was going to make it up on Saturday or Sunday.

DR. CRAWFORD: They knew about your work on weekends.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So, in fact, they let me carry on with the supplement to my salary--officiating.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that Francis Andrews?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of unit did you have for treatment of the prostitutes who needed help out at the Penal Farm?

MR. GRAHAM: Just shots and treatment and held them there until they'd become non-communicable.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did any of them ever leave town?

MR. GRAHAM: Some of them didn't even live here. They just came in for the weekend. Some of these houses -- I know there was one down on Vance, we had four girls out of there at one time. They all came from up in Missouri, around Steele or Sikeston Missouri or somewhere up in there. And they just said they came in for the weekend. I said, "What's your address," and they gave it. And I said, "What are you doing here?"

And they said, "We just came down Saturday to make a few bucks."

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know that. I supposed that the people

who were there always stayed there. I didn't know.

MR. GRAHAM: Some of them were very respectable girls, I'm sure, in their home town.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know that. I had guessed that they stayed, lived at the houses there. They did have most of the houses? Was it on Mulberry or in that neighborhood?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, you take the big red place on Vance between Main and Second, on the south side of the street. It was full of them back there in 1908, when my daddy was running a drugstore at Vance and Main. All down Vance were houses of prostitution, red-light district, they called it. And then on Mulberry, always has been what they called the red-light district.

DR. CRAWFORD: They did a lot of business with people from the river, I guess the boat traffic, didn't they?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: I had read that they did back in steamboat days. But you know they were declining in the nineteen hundreds. They had a lot of people coming in from Mississippi and other places, around in the countryside. Weekends were probably the busy times there, and that's when you had most of the arrests, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. See, the taxi drivers--I had a relative, during the Depression he started driving a Yellow Cab. He made more money taking people from the railroad station to a house of ill repute than he made driving the taxi, from his



fares.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a big business, then. And I know it operated with political protection for quite a while. It must have been a shock to them when they closed down and Holy Joe cleaned the city up.

MR. GRAHAM: Well actually, I'll say this. The political approval was probably strictly on lower levels.

DR. CRAWFORD: The police who supervised it or something like that.

MR. GRAHAM: Maybe somebody at lower levels, maybe a lieutenant or deputy or something like that. But I don't believe in the top brass, now maybe a man might buy so many poll taxes to distribute or something like that, Mr. Crump would favor him. Mr. Rice would favor him, or Mr. Hale would favor him, but I don't think really that anyone in the top echelon in the government ever took a dishonest dollar. You just couldn't make me think it.

DR. CRAWFORD: I had heard that they had to get protection from the police who worked around the area there.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, just like a police friend of mine who later became a City Court officer--police officer for the City Court--wanted to go back in the first ward. He said two more years in ward one and he could retire.

[Side 2]

MR. GRAHAM: ...Lieutenants down.



DR. CRAWFORD: The ones who were actually out there, I guess, and that was where they could make a fortune, I guess. In Ward One and Beat One, was that the Vance-Mulberry district there?

MR. GRAHAM: Just take Main Street from one end to the other and back east about four streets. You'd get your bootleggers also in "Pinch" and north Memphis. And so it was squad cars and before that the walking beat and maybe up to a lieutenant. I doubt if it went any higher than that.

DR. CRAWFORD: So it was the people who were actually on the streets?

MR. GRAHAM: So I don't think it was political. I think it was actually...

DR. CRAWFORD: At the police level?

MR. GRAHAM: Law enforcement level.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, they lost that when Joe Boyle cleaned up, then. That must have really changed that retirement plan there.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, it was.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see. Boyle was police commissioner. Do you remember who followed him?

MR. GRAHAM: Let's see. Was it Buddy Dwyer?

DR. CRAWFORD: I think he was later.

MR. GRAHAM: But he wasn't Fire and Police Commissioner. No, he wasn't Fire and Police Commissioner. Oh, Claude Armour.

DR. CRAWFORD: Claude Armour?



MR. GRAHAM: Yes, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now he had been in World War II, hadn't he, and came back?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, but he had been on the Fire Department. Was he on the Fire Department? He was on either the Fire or Police Department, one or the other. Claude Armour came up through there and I was thinking it was the Fire Department, but he was in charge of both when he was Fire and Police Commissioner. But he was the one that followed Boyle.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well what happened to Joe Boyle? Did he die in the forties?

MR. GRAHAM: He was living after I got back from the Army.

DR. CRAWFORD: In 'forty-six?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Because I remember this very vividly. His daughter married a friend of mine's brother. She married Joe Jones. He later became a lawyer. He was on the Fire Department when Joe Boyle's daughter married him. And they lived in the Boyle's home. Well a friend of mine had some obscene records. Joe Jones' brother Paul, he and his wife were living in New York, but they came back for a visit. I went down to this friend of mine's record shop and got some of these obscene records and played them here and then we took them over so Joe and his wife could hear and they were living with Commissioner Boyle, so we took those obscene records to the Commissioner's house and played them.

Later Mr. Boyle was visiting Mr. Crump on the fifth floor one day there and he said, "I heard about the records." [Laughter]

DR. CRAWFORD: At Joe Boyle's place. But Joe Boyle was a devout Catholic, wasn't he?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, he never went to the office without stopping in the church there at Adams and Third, every morning. Joe Boyle stopped in that church every morning as regular as going to work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well you knew some interesting people at that time, the forties and fifties. Some of them were passing away, I guess.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. But I know he was living after 'forty-eight, because we were living here when we got the records, when Paul and his wife came down from New York.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did Francis Andrews live very long after World War II? He was still alive when you went to work for Mr. Crump.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, he was still alive then. I don't know. I remember after his death I sold Bobby Andrews, his son, some insurance. I went to his home. And he was living across the street from the his parents' home. Bobby was living on the west side of McLean and 222, I think, was the number of the Commissioner. I'm not sure when the Commissioner died.

DR. CRAWFORD: Some of the people who had helped Mr. Crump so much, I know, had begun to pass away by that time. Of course, some are still around. I want to talk to you, Jimmie, about your work in the business, next time. And about the opportunities you had to meet Mr. Crump at the Christmas parties and what kind of leader he was.

THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "MEMPHIS DURING THE CRUMP ERA." THE DATE IS JULY 7, 1988. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. JAMES O. GRAHAM. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. ALSO PRESENT IS MAJ. BEN SCHULTZE. TRANSCRIBED BY J. DOUGLAS SIMS. INTERVIEW V.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Graham, let me start by asking you another question or two about Memphis history, because you have seen a few chapters that didn't get recorded. One of them, do you know something first-hand about the opening of the Harahan Bridge in 1916 in the Fort Pickering area? What do you remember about that? What happened at the opening of the Harahan Bridge?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, they had a number of dignitaries there. Of course, the Mayor of Memphis and so forth. I don't recall who was Mayor in 'sixteen. You were allowed to walk across it. You couldn't drive across it. You could walk across it, and then walk back over to the Tennessee end of the bridge, because when you got to the end of the bridge, there was a wooden runway over the lowlands there that went all the way to near Marion, Arkansas. In other words, you'd come off of the real bridge onto this wooden runway with wooden rails on the sides, planks, is what it was. And you'd come off that way to get to Marion, Arkansas. But we walked over there and walked back--two bulldogs on leashes, my dad, my older sister and myself.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were a lot of people walking across that thing?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. It was crowded.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well I did not know that. The Harahan now has railroad tracks in the middle.

MR. GRAHAM: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: And it had these wooden roads, I believe they call them wagon ways, on each side of it.

MR. GRAHAM: We went right on up to it right off, really, we call it E.H. Crump Boulevard now, but it was Iowa then. I call it I-O-Way. It was Iowa then. And, oh, you can go right on up there just about like it is today, going up to the bridge. The Harahan was the second.

DR. CRAWFORD: The Frisco was opened in 1892, but carried only trains.

MR. GRAHAM: It had a place on the side there that you could walk.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's what I was talking about, Mr. Graham. There was one on each side of the bridge, upriver and downriver, wasn't there?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. There was a road, on down there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Straight across.

MR. GRAHAM: And we just walked across like we were an automobile or something going across. We walked across there.

DR. CRAWFORD: From the Memphis side?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's get back to 1916 when you walked across the bridge. It had just opened. They had new timber

on it, I guess, new lumber for the roadways. And they had one on each side of the bridge. Traffic went one way, toward Arkansas, on one and toward Tennessee on the other.

MR. GRAHAM: The north side went across to Arkansas and the south side came from Arkansas to Tennessee. The railroad tracks were in between.

DR. CRAWFORD: And on the Arkansas side, these roadways went down to ground level so traffic could drive on.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, but that thing must have been a mile-and-a-half or two miles long. That roadway, that plank, wooden roadway.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had a long walk across that bridge and back with your bulldogs, then.

MR. GRAHAM: Well all you did was walk across the bridge and turn around. You didn't go down the viaduct. You didn't walk the plank road. You just went to the end of the bridge proper and turned around and came back on the other side.

DR. CRAWFORD: You still had to walk way over a mile, I believe.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, yes. It was a good ways across there. But we walked to the bridge every morning, to exercise the dogs, because we didn't have a big yard and we had to keep them on a leash, even in the yard. And we would walk, the two dogs and the three of us, to the river every morning from Iowa and Florida. At six o'clock in the morning. Daddy opened the store at seven o'clock.

DR. CRAWFORD: You walked over to exercise the dogs, then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. I guess he thought more of the dogs than he



did us, anyhow. [Laughter]

DR. CRAWFORD: Well you lived close to the Fort Pickering area, didn't you?

MR. GRAHAM: Right on the edge of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was it like when you were a boy?

MR. GRAHAM: We lived on the southeast corner of Florida and Iowa, they called it then. It's E.H. Crump Boulevard now. My dad had a drugstore there. And a funny thing, a bridge or overpass, they call them now, we called them bridges back in those days, viaduct. There were three of them for railroad tracks going across on into the stations further north. And it dipped down and the road went under the bridges. And that was a steep incline where going off of South Main. Main Street ended and took up again on the other side of Desoto and there was a big field in there then. We'd come up to that incline.

Now from the viaduct to the drugstore on the south side of Iowa was all black. Across the street on the north side was all white, all the way into John Wade Grain Company. Then when you went on past, going west, back, we were 7 East Iowa and Jake Smith, Frisco engineer, was 7 West Iowa. The first building on either side started with 7. Why, I don't know. This was on Florida Street. All the way to Kentucky where Fire Station Number 10 was, was white. On the other side there was really nothing. Later there was a black church there. A church for black people, I say. The church wasn't black. A church for black people was built there and then he went to W.T. Raleigh Company and Commercial on the north side and then you picked up from Kentucky

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all the way to the river was all the way white. No blacks there. Then you go one block south to Illinois, and you'd have a block of white and from Florida to Kentucky was all black, both sides of the street. And from there to Kansas was very few homes, but after you reached . Kansas it was all white all the way to the river. And there on the left-hand side at Pennsylvania and Illinois was this company but I forget the name of it.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Watkins?

MR. GRAHAM: The J. R. Watkins Company was on Iowa and it was W.T. Raleigh. J. R. Watkins was the one on Iowa and Kentucky and W.T. Raleigh was at Pennsylvania and Illinois. Then all the way west, down to the river, was all white. And everything up in that section all the way back to Wisconsin was white. And then, in fact, most everything south of Illinois was black. There was a general mixture there. The majority of our customers at the drugstore were black railroadmen. Frisco and I.C. Railroad men.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, was Fort Pickering that north or south of the Frisco Railroad? I know it was north of it, but was part of Fort Pickering south of the railroad?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, practically everything south of the bridge was called Fort Pickering in those days.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the area north? Was part of that called Fort Pickering?

MR. GRAHAM: I guess if you lived on Carolina or Virginia you could say you lived in Fort Pickering but I don't think it was ever called Fort Pickering. It was mostly industrial



in there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Right down by the riverfront. Well, how much open space was there in Fort Pickering? Was some of it not used?

MR. GRAHAM: I'm trying to think.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know that I want to ask you about this military camp there in World War I.

MR. GRAHAM: Well now, down on the riverfront there were very few things. They were all camped right near the riverfront. I don't know how many soldiers were there, men were there, but it wasn't... couldn't have been a large camp from the area they had to put their tents.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they had soldiers camped there, a tent camp of soldiers, in World War I. Who were these soldiers and what were they doing there, Mr. Graham?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, they were assigned there to protect the bridge. They would stop you. You couldn't go across that bridge without them checking you. They were Alabama troops.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know why Alabama troops were sent into Tennessee to do that?

MR. GRAHAM: I guess they were available. In other words, see, each state had its own troops and it wasn't anything like the United States Army then. What the United States Army was each state had troops, just like Tennessee troops. They went to the Philipines, and they took their wives with them. Mr. Gillespie took Mrs. Gillespie to Manila when he was a captain in



the Tennessee troops. So I guess if you were an officer you could take your wife with you.

Why the Alabama troops were there, I don't know, but I know that Daddy was very proud of them because he had served in the Spanish-American War under Joe Wheeler and he didn't [hesitate] to let anybody know that Joe Wheeler won the Spanish-American war and not Teddy Roosevelt. He said that Teddy Roosevelt hid down in the valley with his horses and men until after Joe Wheeler directed the fight of San Juan Hill from a tree. Wheeler weighed less than a hundred pounds. He was a general in the Alabama troops. And Daddy said he directed from the tree and said he put those Alabama black boys in front and he said they hit that barbed wire like you'd take a tractor now. He said those boys from Alabama hit that barbed wire and just cleared it out of the way. And he said after it was all over, Teddy Roosevelt said , "Boys, look what we've done."

He said Joe Wheeler just got down out of that tree and said, "What the hell have you done?" I'm pretty sure this is exaggerated some, but pretty well the true thing there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now your father had been in the Spanish-American war under General Joe Wheeler.

MR. GRAHAM: He was aide to General Wheeler. First lieutenant at sixteen.

DR. CRAWFORD: And General Wheeler, you know, was a Civil War general who was still around to fight in the Spanish-American War and command both southern and northern soldiers. It sort of brought the country together. Do you know



how long that camp was there?

MR. GRAHAM: I have no idea.

DR. CRAWFORD: What were you going over to that camp to do, Jim?

MR. GRAHAM: Well actually, to trade with the soldiers. No, I just like anybody goes to see an army soldier or something, you know, go see them. You know, a lot of people, boys, kids, like to go out to the Navy and see the sailors. So I guess it was just curiosity, more or less.

In fact, I had some bullets, and then we had a big thing here, I remember, in Court Square, people who had fought in Belgium were back here on a bond sale and they gave me some bullets that long. I gave them to a fellow up at the courthouse who was a gun -- antique gun collector. I gave him some of those bullets there. They were still loaded when I gave them to him. I just gave them to him ten or twelve years ago. But, no, I was going to CBC then. We'd go up there at the guns mounted in court square and these fellows who had fought over in Belgium and France, they were there touring after they came back to the states. And Brother Luke Josephs at CBC would march us down there.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was in World War I at the bond sale?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was that bond sale rally like? Did they have a parade or a band or anything?

MR. GRAHAM: All I can remember is Brother Luke lining us up on Adams and marching us up there. Anyway, I went to a boarding school after my dad died. Mother put me in



CBC to board, I was so darned mean. I could cuss like a sailor. I learned to cuss at the old Beale Street market. I had an uncle who was a huckster, they called them, on a market wagon. [He] came from Mississippi. He lived out on Arcadian Hill, which is south of Fort Pickering. You've got Fort Pickering, Meacham Town, Riverside Park and North Arcadian Hill. I'd go out there on Friday, weekend, and go to the market with him on Saturday morning. And when you went to market in Memphis then, you'd buy your produce at Beale Street Market, which was down at Hernando and Beale. And there was a restaurant across the street. We'd leave on North Arcadian Hill and drive in a horse drawn wagon to the market. This was all a part of Fort Pickering; I mean an extension of Fort Pickering. We'd drive up there and Uncle Johnny would buy his produce, turnip greens and stuff like that. And we'd eat over at the restaurant and those hucksters would cuss.

So I learned to cuss in Italian after awhile there. I've forgotten most of it now. I could cuss up a storm in Italian. And you'd have fights at market and everything down there. Mostly, you'd have a few Mississippi boys like Uncle John, but most of them were Italian truckfarmers coming there. But we'd get on that horse and wagon and go all the way down Vance and circle around streets and circle around as far over as Mississippi Avenue. And you know, his horse was just like the Cloverleaf Farm Dairy mules. He could just walk up and down the street there and that horse would know where to stop and where a regular customer was.

DR. CRAWFORD: He knew the route.



MR. GRAHAM: He knew the route. Yes, anybody could have sold his market, carried his route, in other words, because he had a blind horse named Dan. When Lindy died, he bought a blind horse. And Dan knew where every stop was. And how he did it, I don't know. That's what you call horse sense, I guess.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you would make the tour with him when he was selling produce?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, I'd help him to sell. Turnip greens, green onions, potatoes. We didn't have any scales. You bought a sack of potatoes, is the way we'd sell them. Then when we'd get through with that, I'd be as sleepy as I could be and I'd go to sleep on the wagon, and Uncle John liked to shoot pool, so we'd come on back down Florida Street to Trigg and Trigg to Kansas and Trigg where Will Echols had a salon and a pool room. And if anybody wanted to know where John Crumpler was after he got through with his market route, and he'd be though by eleven or twelve o'clock, he would be in there shooting pool.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now this was your uncle?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you spell his last name?

MR. GRAHAM: C-R-U-M-P-L-E-R. He's deceased now. He and Aunt Lizzi. His wife was my mother's sister. Yes, Uncle John. He was the only uncle I had who was really close. Uncle Grover and the rest of them were nice to me, but Uncle John took me to the prizefights and baseball game and stuff like that. In other words, that was then even before my daddy died. He had two girls and no boys. I guess I was his boy.



DR. CRAWFORD: I can understand. What did Fort Pickering look like then? Did you have any businesses or any large buildings in there or was it all residential?

MR. GRAHAM: The largest buildings were J.R. Watkins Company and W.T. Raleigh and Company. They were the largest businesses. Then you had the Rose Spring Mattress Company. The mattress company is still out there. The Rose Spring Mattress Company and Watkins and Raleigh. I guess the next largest place was Riverside School.

DR. CRAWFORD: What street was that on?

MR. GRAHAM: Wisconsin.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did Watkins Street get its name?

MR. GRAHAM: Watkins Street? I have no idea.

DR. CRAWFORD: I wondered if it was named for Mr. Watkins.

MR. GRAHAM: I really don't know about that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well what about the Watkins Company there? What business was that, Jimmie? What did it do?

MR. GRAHAM: They sold spices and flavorings and stuff like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they have traveling salesmen who went through the country?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, it was sort of like the Avon woman. They were individual operators.

DR. CRAWFORD: I though I remembered that. They would come to my mother's place selling.

MR. GRAHAM: Like the Fuller Brush man.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was pretty far out of Memphis.



MR. GRAHAM: Well, they were individual entrepreneurs, I guess you would say.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is the building still there?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: It's a large building on Crump, now, isn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: It's on Kentucky and Crump. The northwest corner.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that a large business?

MR. GRAHAM: All through the south, I think maybe every town in Mississippi and Arkansas and Tennessee had a Watkins representative. In fact, the man who was president of it, Mr. Laws, was a member of our church that died just several years ago.

DR. CRAWFORD: Lindenwood Christian?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who owned that company?

MR. GRAHAM: Mr. J.R. Watkins, I guess. I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was not a stock...

MR. GRAHAM: I don't know whether it was or not. I was kind of small. I just remember it was a great big company that smelled good when you'd get up near.

DR. CRAWFORD: A spice factory. Well, what manufacturers did you have in that area?

MR. GRAHAM: American Fork and Hoe Company, which is probably still there. They manufactured hand tools, farm implements, shovels, and rakes... I've got a sharpshooter, a shovel, and a rake that they gave me when I moved out here. I hadn't been in contact there, but Fritz Anschultz worked out there



and he called me and said, "They want to see you."

I went to the factory and they said, "We heard that you just bought a house." And they gave me all of this equipment. And then you had the spoke factory which was right across from Riverside School on Wisconsin.

DR. CRAWFORD: Soap factory?

MR. GRAHAM: Spoke. S-P-O-K-E. Wagon spokes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Wagon wheels, yes.

MR. GRAHAM: It later became the National Distillery's Barrel Factory. It used to be the spoke factory. I forget the name. I don't know -- it was a spoke factory. They made wooden spokes for wagons and automobiles.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a big business when you were born but became less important as time went on--automobile wheels.

MR. GRAHAM: Well then they turned it over to making barrels for the National Distillery. Abe Plough owned it.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the seating company, the chair sales company in there? What did that do and who owned it?

MR. GRAHAM: I believe his name was Ed Sapinsley who was affiliated with M. A. Lightman of Malco Enterprises and he'd buy used chairs and seats and stuff from old theaters and places like that and resell them. That was more of a storehouse than anything else. Of course, I guess Lightman owned the business--the building was the old Hinkle Theater. Later the city rented it for the DeSoto Community Center.



DR. CRAWFORD: What street was the Hinkle Theater on?

MR. GRAHAM: Let me think. Louisiana, I believe.

DR. CRAWFORD: Louisiana Street?

MR. GRAHAM: I believe it was. I get my states mixed up as I go towards the river. I know Delaware runs in front of Desoto Park.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well you know, Fort Pickering began to change, and it's a lot different now. What caused the area to change?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, two editors of the paper used to live on Illinois. Null Adams who was an editor for the Press-Scimitar,. He was the City Editor of the Press-Scimitar. Null is still living, as far as I know. He was born and raised in Fort Pickering there on Illinois Street just west of Pennsylvania. And Malcolm Adams, his brother, who is deceased now, was City Editor of The Commercial Appeal. We had brothers as city editors of both papers here at one time. And they were born and raised right out there on Illinois Street. Malcolm lived there, oh, after he'd come along with the paper for a good while.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about street-building? Did they change the streets through Fort Pickering? I know for a while the U.S. highways hadn't connected with the Harahan Bridge. Did that change the neighborhood any?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't believe so. I don't know who lives there now and what. I haven't been out there in years. But I think the city just had to move east. And people just like... when somebody came out here from north of Memphis, up



through Shelby County and Tipton County and up in there, a very prominent black man told me this. He was the principal of one of the schools at that time. And he said they'd move to north Memphis. They'd get a regular job and get a little more affluent and they'd move to south Memphis. And they'd get a real good job and they'd move to east Memphis. And he said, "If a person progresses, they go up the ladder, they ought to start moving east. So I imagine most of those people just got better off and moved.

And then a good many people, practically all of the blacks that had good jobs and a number of the whites, were railroad men. And I guess with all of the laying off and so forth and the railroad men making more money, they just moved to a higher-class neighborhood. I don't know how many of those places out there are occupied now. But, it used to be a good place out there for bootleggers. We had several prominent bootleggers there, one of the most prominent in Memphis, Joe Sailors, lived on Illinois. DR. CRAWFORD: Well, they were supplying a need, because that was during Prohibition.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Up until the thirties, I guess.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, actually, liquor came back in Memphis in 'thirty-nine. It may have come back in some other states sooner, but it didn't come into Memphis until 'thirty-nine. All of us in insurance were going after that insurance business in liquor stores. I was after them too. [Laughter] I was working for E.H. Crump and Company.



DR. CRAWFORD: I guess they manufactured liquor elsewhere, but the bootleggers worked in the city, in Fort Pickering and places...

MR. GRAHAM: Well, around the Wolf River and Nonconnah you'd have stills. Joe Sailors, so I understand, kept his stills on Presidents's Island. He owned property over there.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was President's Island like then? Was it overgrown? I know it was not developed the way it is now.

MR. GRAHAM: When the water was right, they'd have crops over there. It was farmland. Dense woods and everything. You'd have a few settlers over there living on houses on stilts. Because some of those people had to come across the river in a rowboat to come to school -- the old Market Street School. They'd row across to get there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Times were certainly different then. Now what is your first recollection, Jimmie of the east boundary of Memphis? I know all of the time you have lived here, you have kept moving east. About where was the eastern edge of the city when you first remembered knowing about it?

MR. GRAHAM: Parkway. It circled around the city. All around the city. That was the city limits.

DR. CRAWFORD: That would have been about World War I or so?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Let's see. Parkway was still the city limits when we moved to Highland Heights in 1922. It was the city limits.

DR. CRAWFORD: After the war, then.



MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: How much building up was outside the Parkway, though?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh, I would say very little. For instance, when we moved here in 'forty-eight, this subdivision had a hundred and sixty-five houses. All back there was cotton fields all the way to Graham Avenue in forty-eight.

DR. CRAWFORD: You're pointing toward the north.

MR. GRAHAM: The north, yes. All of this used to be Koch's Farm. Koch was a dairy farmer. And his property ran from Highland all the way to Graham. Joe Koch went to CBC with me and I'd come out and spend the weekend at their house up here on Highland, right at the top of the hill, a big, two-story house. It's not there now.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's K-O-C-H?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Some call it Cook and some call it Cotch, but it was Joe Koch.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were there other farms between here and Parkway at that time? Was it all developed or were there other farms?

MR. GRAHAM: At Parkway and Summer Avenue on the southwest corner. Quay Fernandez' daddy ran a drive-in, Rustic Inn. It was about the second drive-in in Memphis. And then they moved it around on Summer where Ray Gammon later had it. Quay Fernandez, a good left-handed pitcher. By the way, his dad started a barbeque stand. And they didn't have a driveway. You stopped right on the Parkway and the boys would come out to the



cars. I remember in 1917 after my dad died, Mr. Abe Plough took us driving that way and I think I remember telling you about I told him I didn't think Jews ate pork. I think I told you that.

DR. CRAWFORD: No.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, Mr. Plough took my mother and my two sisters and myself in the car and took us for a drive in this big grey Cadillac. He had handled my daddy's funeral arrangements. And he stopped at the Rustic Inn. And I kind of got mad because we had a cousin just a block south of that at Broad and Parkway, Walter Rideout that ran a barbeque stand.

[Side Two]

MR. GRAHAM: The Rustic Inn originally didn't have any driveway or parking places and neither did Rideout.

DR. CRAWFORD: We'll have to stop in a moment, Mr. Graham -- what were the first three drive-ins in the town?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, the only real drive-in that had a place where you could drive in to it was Fortune's Jungle Garden on Union. And the second was Rideout's.

DR. CRAWFORD: Rideout's, where was that?

MR. GRAHAM: Parkway and Central on the northwest corner, he had property there where you could get off the street and drive in and park on his property. Now you had plenty of people that served you curb service. Curb service, you might want to call it drive-in, but it was curb service and not drive-in.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the Cotton Boll, Jimmie?



MR. GRAHAM: It was at the northeast corner of East Parkway north and Autumn. And originally, Pete Friedel ran it.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was his name?

MR. GRAHAM: Pete Friedel. F-R-I-E-D-E-L. And later, Harris Schuener of the Gridiron took over the Cotton Boll. And he later turned it over to some of his employees to run. But it was a separate corporation from the Gridiron. Harris was a good friend of mine and we'd eat lunch there quite frequently and I never could pay for it because the boss was there. But you know, he paid for everything he bought in his restaurant? He paid for it. He wouldn't have it on the house. He paid for it.





THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "MEMPHIS DURING THE CRUMP ERA." THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE DATE IS JULY 14, 1988. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. JAMES O. GRAHAM. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW # 6.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Graham, today especially I'd like to talk about something you know better than most other people alive now---and that is the leadership of Mr. Crump. You grew up during the Crump era when it was being formed from the time he became mayor in 1910 and you were aware of his leadership throughout all this time in the city and then later, I believe, later at the close of World War II you went to work for him. So you had an unusually close opportunity to observe Mr. Crump and see what kind of leader and how he managed things and what the city was like. That is what I would like to talk about today. Do you remember your first impressions about Mr. Crump? Do you remember your first impressions or when you first saw him or learned of him?

MR. GRAHAM: I first learned of Mr. Crump when I was six years of age. My Aunt Sadie, my mother's sister, was dating Elzie Kressenberg and she was living with us on Stafford Avenue and they had a political meeting at the corner of McLemore and Cummings. They gave away free watermelons and stuff so Uncle Elzie on his date with Aunt Sadie--he was later to become Uncle



Elzie--took me along to this political rally. That's the first I ever heard of Mr. Crump and I started eating Crump barbeque when I was six and I was eating Crump barbeque when he died.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your life was lived pretty much through the Crump era. What year was that rally you mentioned?

MR. GRAHAM: I moved from there when I was six years old. I was born in 1908 so it was either 1912 or '13 along in there.

DR. CRAWFORD: That would have been when he was mayor.

MR. GRAHAM: Just after he was mayor, I think.

DR. CRAWFORD: By then he would have served one term and I guess would be elected to another about at that time.

What was the political rally like? What do you remember about it?

MR. GRAHAM: To me the most important thing was the watermelon, but there was a lot of shouting and whooping and noise and part of Will Handy's Band, I understand, were playing the Memphis Blues which was originally a song written for Mr. Crump.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that the song that Mr. Crump don't llow?

MR. GRAHAM: "No easy riders here. We don't care what Mr. Crump lflows, we are goin' barrel house anyhow." Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: As you grew up, you learned more about Memphis with Mr. Crump as a leader. What impressions did you have as you got a little older and through school?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, actually we always knew that Mr. Crump, I remember that he had his ward captains throughout the town and my Uncle John Crumpler lived out on Arcadian Hill. He was the wardman for Mr. Crump out there. I can remember him



giving poll tax to all the people around there which were mostly black. He'd load them up on this spring wagon and take them up to Meachamtown to vote which was up on Trigg Avenue. He'd line them up there and he would furnish them all their poll tax.

DR. CRAWFORD: Would he keep the poll tax during the year and give it to them at voting time?

MR. GRAHAM: Poll tax came in books. They were assigned to the ward workers so many poll tax books. You were supposed to either buy them or sell them. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: But at any rate they had to be paid for?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: They had to be used on voting day?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. I can remember my Uncle John loading them up and taking them up there and coming back and getting another wagon full and driving them back up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what the poll tax cost then?

MR. GRAHAM: Two dollars. It never did cost over two dollars as far as I know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, that was a great deal more money then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Back in those days it could have cost less, I don't know about that. But I know when I paid my first poll tax, I was twenty-one years old. I never did get my free vote. You were supposed to get your free vote when you became age twenty-one. I was working for the Park Commission and they took the two dollars out of my paycheck. I told them I was supposed to have a free vote, but Mr. Dave Renfro, the Superintendent of Park Commission said, "If you are old enough to



work for the city, you're old enough to pay poll tax." so I paid for my first poll tax and didn't get my free vote.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Graham, you say you have given away a lot of poll taxes, how did that happen?

MR. GRAHAM: Some friend of mine would say, "I want to buy ten poll tax." I would say, "Fine."

He would say, "Give them to whoever will vote right." And that is what I did with them.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he mean by "vote right?"

MR. GRAHAM: Vote the Crump ticket!

DR. CRAWFORD: Someone would pay you and make a contribution to buy, say, ten poll taxes?

MR. GRAHAM: They would actually buy them and then say, "give them away." Just like you would buy ten coca colas and say, "give them to the kids out there."

DR. CRAWFORD: So essentially that was a political contribution and that is just the way people did it back then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: They don't do that now. They give money more directly now, of course.

MR. GRAHAM: Of course, the poll tax has been abolished. But it used to be if you didn't pay your poll tax, they could take your coat, pants or anything you had--deputies could when they came to collect your poll tax if they wanted to. They never did do it in Memphis as far as I know. Actually, on the poll tax I used to have when I was living in the nineteenth ward, I had one hundred and sixty apartments in one apartment house just



north of Madison on Bellevue. I'd go to the resident manager and just give him a bunch of poll tax and tell him to sell them for me. Then he'd get the second and third. He sold a lot of poll tax for me. I always paid personally. I paid four dollars for his and his wife's poll tax, but that made me the leading poll tax seller in the ward. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: He would report back to you, I suppose.

MR. GRAHAM: I would go to collect my money. In other words, I gave him the poll tax and then I get my money from him, but I would give him and his wife the resident manager free poll tax. He did a lot of work for four dollars.

We also had back in those days, you had a ward card. You had a card on every household in your precinct in your ward to call on. That's what you call organization. That is the reason Crump was successful. Everyone of those people you would note on that card when you were there if there was an invalid in the house or a person could not come--bed ridden. Then you would see that a judge of the court of the election would go with the worker and let them vote from the bedside. There had to be a judge of the election to be there and let them vote just like an absentee ballot.

Then you would have a car ready for the one that didn't have transportation. I've hauled all day and used a tank of gas hauling people to the polls. That's organization.

DR. CRAWFORD: It really is.

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, I didn't have a political job. You did your job and that was it. But I figured this, Dr.



Graves had a political job. He was my boss and I'd keep my boss on his job by doing that for Dr. Graves.

DR. CRAWFORD: You helped your boss by taking part.

MR. GRAHAM: That's right. I enjoyed it too. It made you feel a little important too to be able to say, "Well, I helped put him in." It helped again too if somebody in your ward needed a job you could recommend him to the department and he'd get that job. In other words we had three people to apply for a job in the Health Department. One man and his wife had helped me sell a lot of poll tax and one was a Republican and the other couldn't even control his family vote. So I was asked of the three in my precinct what about them. I picked the man that got the job. That's the way your politics floated down in there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it was a benefit for people in that way.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about these cards? Were they kept in a central headquarters or was it decentralized where they were kept by every ward manager?

MR. GRAHAM: Everybody in charge was responsible for doing it or having it done.

DR. CRAWFORD: So the card file was likely to be in every ward rather than in a central place.

MR. GRAHAM: No central place.

DR. CRAWFORD: I had not understood that. The poll taxes were issued to the wards too?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember about how many wards were in the



city about that time? I know we can look that one up.

MR. GRAHAM: I can remember the fiftieth ward was a new ward at that time. That was back in the thirties. I can remember the fiftieth ward.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, the population was smaller then. What about the precinct organization? How would the wards and the precincts fit together.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, actually let's take the seventeenth ward. That was the ward I started working in when I first got married and when I transferred from the Park Commission to the Health Department. You had the seventeenth ward. Well, the seventeenth ward started on the east side of Bellevue and went to McNeil. Then from McNeil to Belvedere and Belvedere to Cooper. It was divided that way. We had three precincts in the seventeenth ward. Each one had his ward boss more or less.

I remember when I first got there Mike Gaven and Harry Kingston were in seventeen (17-3). I lived there first--17 ward-precinct 3. Then when I moved to the nineteenth ward, Sam Jackson was in charge. There was another guy that worked with him in the nineteenth ward. They never did do any work. I did all the work in the nineteenth ward when I moved to 109 North Bellevue which was on the west side of the street. Will Fowler was supposed to be in charge of seventeen three,(17-3) but he never did work. Mike Gavin and Harry Kingston did all the work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Will Fowler was serving, I guess, as City Engineer, wasn't he? Was that about usual that you



would have about three precincts per ward?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, I think it was two or three precincts in every ward. It's almost like that now. I live in 44-1 here. I think there are just three precincts in the fortieth ward I'm not sure.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, was the organization broken down any by streets or blocks or anything within a precinct?

MR. GRAHAM: No, other than where you were assigned. You see they would have a meeting of all city employees and you were more or less expected if not told to go to a ward meeting or a precinct meeting. You'd meet in somebody's backyard or somebody's business and have your meeting there. "Where do you live, Graham?" "I live up on Bellevue." "Okay, we'll give you Bellevue." And that more or less is the way I got Bellevue from Madison. Actually, I had Bellevue from Union to Poplar. That's the way it was. I don't know how it originally was done, but that is the way it was done when I was working in it.

DR. CRAWFORD: How many voters would you guess were in a precinct on the average?

MR. GRAHAM: I have no earthly idea.

DR. CRAWFORD: It would be quite a number to keep up with.

MR. GRAHAM: I have no earthly idea how many would vote.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you keep the files? Were they alphabetical? Did you have them by area?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, the ones I got were just of Bellevue and street numbers. Of course, people could move in and out. You'd have Bellevue Street numbers. You'd have the name



of the last time that somebody was there. If somebody else had moved in, then you'd introduce yourself and change the name on the card.

DR. CRAWFORD: I had not heard about that help to invalid voters before.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was new to me. I didn't realize that. But a judge and an election worker would go to the home of the bedfast person. I didn't realize that. What about transportation? You provided a lot of that at your own expense with your own car, didn't you?

MR. GRAHAM: Right. Of course, most of us were on a car allowance from the city or county. When I was working for Health Department I was on a car allowance. I got fifty dollars a month and had to use it every day and some nights.

But of course, you got some food. Now the precinct captain--he and his wife and the people that worked the polls--fixed up cookies, cakes and sandwiches and cold drinks and had them there for the poll workers. Back in those days if it happened to be a man in a shady business like a little bootlegging, that bootlegger fed you. (laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: He would usually provide some refreshments.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, he would do it. I remember I was working in nineteenth ward there was a bootlegger right there on Dudley. He would always put up the money for the food and stuff that you had at the poll.

DR. CRAWFORD: He had good reason to get along well with city

government. He didn't need any difficulty.

MR. GRAHAM: Then each captain in those days were given a certain stipend--maybe fifty dollars or something like that--to furnish stuff for the poll watchers. You see because you had to count those votes. You sit there and count "one, two, three, four, tally--one, two, three, four, tally." Oh man it would drive you crazy!

DR. CRAWFORD: That was not done by machines or computers then.

MR. GRAHAM: No, you had to do that personally.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you needed to have some refreshments there for the poll workers who were doing all that.

MR. GRAHAM: And lunch too. Now, they have to take off an hour to go out, but you stayed right on there and you might take five minutes [to eat.]

DR. CRAWFORD: So the precinct captain would have an allowance usually for that kind of thing?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where would his allowance come from, Jimmie?

MR. GRAHAM: Somewhere uptown. (laughter) I don't know exactly where it came from whether Mr. Boyle or Frank Rice or who had charge of that. I never did go to a precinct's captain's meeting.

DR. CRAWFORD: I am sure that the poll workers and election workers appreciated the refreshments.

MR. GRAHAM: Evelyn's cousin and her husband they handled the precinct out there by Prescott Road and Winchester. Gene Fulghum still handles that as precinct officer. He's officer

of the election and has been for years out there. Agnes fixes up huge amounts of food. That comes out of Gene's pocket. I don't think they give him any allowance. They feed their workers out there--Gene and Agnes do.

She has quit working the polls. Why he fools with it I don't know. He can figure that he works sixteen hours that day for fifty dollars.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he had to pay for the refreshments out of that.

MR. GRAHAM: That's what the officer gets. I got forty dollars.

I worked as a judge, but he is in charge of the election. I forget what they call the head man. I worked as a judge down here and I got forty dollars a day. The last time I worked fourteen hours. I said, "I'm not that civic minded. Give it to somebody else."

They have changed our precinct--44-1. It used to not go past Summer Avenue. It goes past now and I don't know how far. They changed it since I quit working at the poll.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they provide refreshments for voters?

MR. GRAHAM: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'd heard about cases where voters would get water-melon or something like that when they were voting. But that was probably in different wards.

MR. GRAHAM: That was up to the individuals running that particular precinct or ward.

DR. CRAWFORD: That might have been more common in the black wards.

MR. GRAHAM: I imagine those were black people that Uncle John

hauled that got something to eat, you know, besides free poll tax.

DR. CRAWFORD: I had heard and I don't know if this was true or this was just an account of it that they would get watermelon and they would get RC Cola or something like that.

MR. GRAHAM: They probably did, but in the precincts after I was old enough to vote every precinct I lived in was 99 percent white.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you wouldn't need the same things there. How did people feel about the free transportation to vote when you'd come around to pick them up?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, most people in all that time, I never did call on but one person in their home that had anything ill to say about Mr. Crump. I lost my head and got them told. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what their criticism was, Jimmie?

MR. GRAHAM: No, I can't. I just remember they rubbed me the wrong way and my temper was ready to flare anyhow. I was tired and I kind of got them told because they didn't know the good things that man did behind the scenes that never was registered any place.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I doubt that you gave them a ride to the polls then.

MR. GRAHAM: I'll tell it just like I told my wife's uncle. I said, "Nobody asked you to come down here from Kentucky. If you don't like the way Mr. Crump is running things, why in the h--- don't you go back to Kentucky." I told them that

and a full list of names.

Free poll tax.

DR. CASHFORD: I have no objection to this.

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sitting right in their house.

DR. CRAWFORD: You found only one family in one place where there was criticism like that. Tell us about your transportation now.

MR. GRAHAM: When I would take people to the polls I'd know who I was taking. I never had an occasion to but I probably never would have called on anyone to take them to the polls to vote if I knew they were voting against us. So I am pretty sure whoever I took there was voting our way.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, with your card file and your records you knew pretty well.

MR. GRAHAM: You could tell a lot by where people worked. You could tell if a person worked at E.L. Bruce and Company. And this was a Democrat/Republican vote state or federal thing (election). You knew most of the Bruce [people] were Republicans. In fact, it got so bad at Bruce that they had to work Republicans on one floor and Democrats on the other.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know that! (Laughter)

MR. GRAHAM: I don't know whether it is true or not, but it is alleged that they did. The reason I know I went out there to sell some insurance for a group insurance plan. They told me I never would get it. So I was determined and I got the group insurance business to make a long story short. They told me and that is where I heard the story that one is Democrat and one is Republican. The minute you said E. H. Crump you know it was Democrat. We got the business, although they never had bought anything from Crump before.



DR. CRAWFORD: You made a sale then.

MR. GRAHAM: We had the best deal. The executive vice president was smart enough to know it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Even if the deal was from the Crump business.

MR. GRAHAM: Of course, I happen to know what company they were going to buy it from--what insurance company--actually on group insurance you are just a broker anyhow. Our number one company was Metropolitan. And Metropolitan had just made a three million dollar purchase of flooring for a housing project in St. Louis from E.L. Bruce and Company. So for sure I would get the business by going with Metropolitan. So I knew I had the business sewed up no matter who was the competition was.

DR. CRAWFORD: That would make sense. Did any people ever refuse to go vote?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh you had them to say, I can't pin them down, but I know you would have people say, "My vote don't count anyhow." I know at times, you didn't try to get the vote out. You wanted a low vote.

DR. CRAWFORD: What would be a kind of time that you would want a low vote?

MR. GRAHAM: I'm trying to think. I never did know why. I was told not to even come to the polls. I was sitting there at my desk in the Health Department and Ralph Picard, City Personnel Director came in there and said, "Graham, what are you doing there?"

"I was told I wasn't needed at the polls."

He said, "Get out there. "

I asked the late Sam Jackson, "Mr. Jackson, why did you tell us to go on back to work, you aren't needed?"

He said, "We want to keep the vote low." So I don't know why they wanted to keep the vote low. I never did know why they wanted to keep the vote low.

DR. CRAWFORD: I don't know. That might have been a local election. I know in state-wide elections they wanted a high vote so that Shelby County could offset any other part of the state.

MR. GRAHAM: I don't know why they wanted a low vote that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Picard had not gotten the word about that evidently?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, he was an old newspaperman and Watkins Overton hired him as Personnel Director. At first he was his administrative assistant then he was the first Personnel Director we ever had. Ralph was later City Commissioner. But he was sort of blustering. He would do what he wanted to do anyhow. He didn't back off of anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: So he sent you out to the polls anyway to work that day.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about people who did not vote? Did anyone at the polls keep up with who had been in to vote and who hadn't so that you would need to know who needed transportation?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, if your people on your list hadn't been in to vote, you would call and find out why. Or go



by and see why they hadn't been in to vote or what was holding them up or something like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: What time in the day would that be done?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, about two or three hours before the polls closed. But getting back, you couldn't see how they voted. Sure you could tell how they voted.

DR. CRAWFORD: How could you tell that?

MR. GRAHAM: First, you sign a list whether you are voting Democratic or Republican.

DR. CRAWFORD: In the past?

MR. GRAHAM: You do now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, party affiliation?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, party affiliation. But in local elections those ballots, were handed to the judge and he put it in the box. You can look right through there and see where they were "xed".

DR. CRAWFORD: You mean they were made of thin paper or something so that you could see through it?

MR. GRAHAM: You could read the back of the ballot. (Laughter)

We've had people, I remember a guy with a truck company--Hancock--I can't think of his first name. He came in and was voting against the administration and he had just sold a fleet of trucks to the city. I believe it was White Truck, but I forget what truck company Mr. Hancock was with. He lived over on Jackson Avenue near Springdale. He came in and opened up the ballot and said, "Look, I'm voting against you." He wore a hearing aid. He came in there and said, "Eh, look, voting against you." He

by and not why they are with them.

them up or down.

DR. RAWFORD: I am not sure.

MR. GRANT: I am not sure.

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MR. GRANT: I am not sure.

opened up his ballot and showed us how he voted. I don't know what truck company. It might have been White Truck Company, but anyway, he had just sold a fleet of trucks to the city.

DR. CRAWFORD: He voted against the administration.

MR. GRAHAM: The captain of our precinct there was Gordon Hollingsworth, City Purchasing Agent. He came in and said, "He's going to get a lot of business from me now!"

(Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Voting techniques have changed, you know. Now, you are in a booth and you turn the lever. But then you had to write it on thin paper ballot and hand it to the judge who deposited it.

MR. GRAHAM: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: So he could tell very easily.

MR. GRAHAM: You could tell. In fact, a good judge wouldn't have to see anything. He could even tell from the indentation in the paper. If he "xed" there and you knew where your man was on the ballot. You memorize those ballots. You knew who he was and you could see where they voted. It was easy to do.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that part of the record, then, for future elections how people had voted so that they would know who the supporters and the opponents were.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, he couldn't write it down there or anything. He just tried to memorize--well, that guy is against us, let's don't fool with him or something like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's why you had a lot of control at the ward and precinct level for people there could remember and



keep up with what happened. I do not know about trying to keep the vote low in some elections.

MR. GRAHAM: I never did understand why we were sent to the office and tried to keep it low. I've often thought why. I thought somebody told Mr. Jackson to do it. I don't know why we were keeping it low. I ran into that twice. I ran into it in the Nineteenth Ward and then when I was living in the ward over there--I believe, it was the Thirty-First Ward. That election over there was asked to keep--that was a state election too--it low.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I had not heard of that. I knew that sometimes they wanted as high a vote as possible. That was why poll taxes were paid for and why the black vote was organized and brought in. For you know Shelby County had about a fifth of the population in the state then. That was enough to make a real difference in an election but everyone had to turn out.

MR. GRAHAM: I really don't know why the low vote. I can explain off the record. I can explain. This is off the record.

DR. CRAWFORD: Tell us about purging the voting rolls.

MR. GRAHAM: I'm probably repeating myself, but at one time it was claimed that we had a lot of people registered who were deceased. (Laughter) The fact is I am not going to call the two guys name that worked for the Health Department, but we did have some where their names were taken off tombstones. So Mr. Crump said, "Get those illegal things off there. Purge the thing." So they gave me a crew and I was working for the Health

Department then and gave me a crew and put me in Orange Mound. Well, I couldn't find anybody at home out there so I went back and told them to get Emmett who was custodian of the Orange Mound Playground. Emmett is a good politician. Put him purging it out there. Emmett can get any information. He knows half the people in Orange Mound anyhow.

So we did purge the list there to get the names off that wasn't supposed to be on there.

DR. CRAWFORD: You couldn't find your way around in Orange Mound, could you?

MR. GRAHAM: I could find my way around any place, but when I'd walk in and say "How many people live in this house?" Does so and so live here?" I just couldn't get any information from them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why would they not talk to you now?

MR. GRAHAM: They thought I was the law or something like that. Even in those days, a black wouldn't tell a white man anything unless he happened to know him. You would have to get somebody they trusted or knew.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's why you suggested that they call on the custodian of the Orange Mound Playground? Do you remember his name?

MR. GRAHAM: Emmett was his first name and he was actually custodian when I was Director of the Athletic Building in the winter. In the summer he put on a policemen's uniform, but he would clean up the playgrounds in the winter and get the swimming pool ready and then had to put on his police



uniform and carry his club and keep order on Orange Mound Playground.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he black or white?

MR. GRAHAM: Black. He was a man regardless of color. He was a real man. He ran that playground in that section. Emmett could get anything he wanted from anybody out there. But I didn't know anybody else in Orange Mound that I knew personally that I would say to put him to do it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well the population of Orange Mound I guess was almost completely black then wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: It was and still is. There's an area right in there that he had no trouble. I can't think of his last name to save my neck.

DR. CRAWFORD: So he was the one used to purge the voting list in Orange Mound.

MR. GRAHAM: Give him a crew and he'd get it done. Actually, we didn't have too many then because too many of them weren't in a white cemetery. (laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: But did you get all the voting lists purged in all the wards? You don't have any idea what they found in the others?

MR. GRAHAM: No, I have no idea.

DR. CRAWFORD: But the ones you knew about were purged?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. A little while back one of these guys they had him out selling, no he was a deputy sheriff and they sent the deputy sheriff out if you didn't pay the poll tax,



he could actually take the coat off your back. I know this guy went out as a special deputy working for the tax collector. He went out and was taking people's overcoats and everything else because they didn't pay their poll tax. They had to stop this fellow from doing it.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was interpreting it that they had to buy the poll tax and if they didn't have the money he would collect something.

MR. GRAHAM: It was a tax you were supposed to pay. It was a legal tax just like your real estate tax.

DR. CRAWFORD: I do not understand that. I thought it was optional.

MR. GRAHAM: No, poll tax you had to pay.

DR. CRAWFORD: People could vote or not vote.

MR. GRAHAM: You couldn't vote if you didn't have it.

DR. CRAWFORD: I thought that was the only penalty--that you couldn't vote.

MR. GRAHAM: No, the poll tax collector could actually take personal property.

DR. CRAWFORD: I did not realize that. I've learned something else new today.

MR. GRAHAM: Poll tax didn't come off until '46 or '47 in Memphis, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a Tennessee case, I believe, that brought it before the. . .

MAJOR SCHULTZE: It was nationalized.

MR. GRAHAM: Memphians could vote for free and I got to vote for

free once when I came back from the army. I came back in '45. Actually, it was '46 or '47 before we did away with the poll tax in Memphis.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know where the money collected for poll tax or poll tax sales went? Did it go to the Election Commission?

MR. GRAHAM: No, it went to the tax assessor.

DR. CRAWFORD: I suppose someone at the voting place checked the list, didn't they to see who had paid?

MR. GRAHAM: You had to show your poll tax receipt when you went in. I often thought the same person could use the same receipt several times although you had your ward books and people's registration. The fact is you could go in and vote with the same poll tax and get your name in like that. Now, they have it for years where you can't do it because they look your name up and see the last time you voted. If you miss three times in voting, you can't vote--you have to re-register. Actually, back in those days you would show your poll tax and vote in that precinct and there was nothing to keep you from voting really in more than one precinct--if you changed your name.

DR. CRAWFORD: Anyone would have to change their name, wouldn't they in order to do that?

MR. GRAHAM: I, one time, voted for Stanley Dillard in his ward when he was on a vacation. I went in there. They asked me my name and I said, "Stanley Dillard." And they wrote it down there.

DR. CRAWFORD: You mean that a person could carry another one's



poll tax in and sign for them for they did not ask for identification?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Stumpy McCarthy says, "Jimmie,"

I looked around and said, "Did you say something to me? I'm Stanley Dillard." I went ahead and voted for Stanley when he was out of town. He shouldn't have been out of town when he was.

DR. CRAWFORD: People could sort of give their proxy for voting then by getting someone to carry it.

MR. GRAHAM: It wasn't legal. People used to get us mixed up all the time and I have let his employees off from work thinking they were talking to Stanley. So I went on and voted for him and Stumpy McCarthy years later laughed and said, "I'll never will forget you coming over there and voting for Stanley."

I said, "Well, he would have voted for me if I left town."

DR. CRAWFORD: That was sort of an exchange thing you could do for a friend. Who worked on election day? What people were free to do it? Did city offices close?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually the offices themselves were not closed. But the ones that could do some good in the precinct automatically reported to their precinct. It was kind of understood, but they didn't close the offices.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did the ones that needed to work at the polls get the time off. They did not have to take vacation or anything, did they?

MR. GRAHAM: No, it was off on the city time.

poll tax in the time for the

for identification

MR. GRAM: Yes, sir, I have

I looked at that and

me? I'm not a politician

when he was out of office

he was

DR. CHAMBERLAIN: I don't

any more

MR. GRAM: I don't know

no more

What's the matter

voted for the

"I'll answer that

Grass

I don't know

DR. CHAMBERLAIN: I don't

any more

was there in the

MR. GRAM: I don't know

any more

previous statement

under those

DR. CHAMBERLAIN: I don't

any more

vacation

MR. GRAM: I don't know

DR. CRAWFORD: And the poll workers would sort of watch to be sure that the people they knew would come in to vote. And if not, they would call late in the afternoon or so?

MR. GRAHAM: They would say, "So and so has not been here. Wonder what happened to them?" You had a team working and it wasn't actually poll workers. It was just some so-called volunteers as a team working to get them in. Everybody knew who was supposed to come in off of their streets that were assigned to them. If your people hadn't voted, well you would find out why.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did the teams stay around the polls? Did they have that rule then about certain distance away from the polls?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, the polls were so small, you couldn't put them any distance--in front of a drug store or something like that. On the Seventh Ward we used to meet in the front of the drug store at Crosstown and Madison--right in front of the drug store.

When I first moved down there in 44-1 we met in the Arcade next to the grocery store--just in the Arcade there.

DR. CRAWFORD: What street now?

MR. GRAHAM: This precinct I am living in now--44-1-. Right there by the grocery there is an Arcade, so that actually is where we had the election. You couldn't stop traffic going to the beauty shop and barber shop. Then we tried it in a tent in a vacant lot. Finally we tried it at St. Michael Catholic Church. Now we have it at the Greek Church.



DR. CRAWFORD: On Highland?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: That is more usual, in churches, in schools, fire stations, libraries and things like that.

MR. GRAHAM: It used to be any hole in the wall and some of them used tents.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't realize that either. I think perhaps that is our tape for today, Jimmie. Thank you.

THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "MEMPHIS DURING THE CRUMP ERA." THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. JAMES O. GRAHAM. THE DATE IS JULY 21, 1988. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW # VII.

DR. CRAWFORD: Jimmie, you knew Mr. Crump personally far better than most people did. You were close to him and worked for him and knew him in a work capacity as well as a public one. What sort of person was he in the way he dealt with others? Would you say he was a benevolent person?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, he was benevolent, I was not that close to him. As he told me the first time I met him personally--I'd watched him and seen him and everything--that he was very cordial to everybody, but was not familiar with anyone. He said, "I'm very cordial," but said, "familiarity breeds contempt." "I'm not for mere sentiment." He told me that flat out. So I didn't mix with him socially unless it was a political party or something like that. There are several things that people don't know about his big heart.

There was a lady who worked for him in the real estate business, that was in before he was in the insurance business, that contracted tuberculosis and could not work any longer. In those days you didn't have the quick treatments and the know-how in curing tuberculosis or arresting it as they do today. But for

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over 20 years she didn't miss a payday.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was she working during any of that time?

MR. GRAHAM: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was this one of his employees?

MR. GRAHAM: One of his employees. She had worked E.H. Crump when she contracted tuberculosis, but she didn't miss a payday. Then Jim--I believe his last name was Parker--he was a black man. He ran the elevator for years. Everybody was crazy about Jim on that little elevator.

DR. CRAWFORD: In the Crump building?

MR. GRAHAM: It was the Union Planter's Bank Building then. The Crumps just rented until after his death when the boys bought it. Mr. Crump always rented from Union Planter's Bank. It was the North Memphis Savings Bank Building. Crump had everything but the bank part of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And this elevator operator was named Parker or something like that?

MR. GRAHAM: I know his name was Jim. Everybody called him Jim, but he was elderly when I went to work there. He contracted something and had to have a leg removed. I know I used to visit him after he was unable to work. He was an old time black man and was smarter than people thought he was. I would drive by on North Second Street and he'd be sitting on the front porch. That was after one leg had been amputated. We'd sit there and talk. Well, Jim, what little social security he was getting didn't help out a bit, but he didn't miss a payday from Mr. Crump.

DR. CRAWFORD: He kept him on the payroll too even after he was

over 50 years and about 1900.

DR. CHRISTOPHER, who was working in the

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disabled?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. There was a third party and I can't recall his name. He gave him a title in the real estate department and paid him a salary, but he probably never sold a house. He took care of his employees if they needed it. But he didn't believe in paying big salaries. A promotion was a change in title. In other words if you were there five years and were a fairly good salesman, you became assistant manager of the insurance department. He didn't believe in big salaries, but he believed in taking care of his people.

He was especially a high school football addict I guess you would call it. He noticed the band uniforms of Southside High School one time and they looked ratty. He told the band master and principal to go out and buy new uniforms for them. They said, "We don't have the money."

He said, "You'll get the money." I don't think he gave them the uniforms personally, but he saw that they were paid for.

DR. CRAWFORD: He saw that the money came from somewhere.

MR. GRAHAM: Then in the Blind Football Game one time a young fellow named Fisher playing for Central High School got a broken leg. Mr. Crump saw that he got an ambulance immediately and went to Campbell's Clinic. He sent him to Campbell's Clinic. To set that broken leg they wanted about \$500. Back there in early forties \$500 for setting a broken leg was unheard of. So Crump Jr. said, "Father said for you to go out there and see what they are trying to do." He said, "Because the insurance is not but for \$250." He said, "But if you have to,

displeased

MR. GRAHAM:

Yes, I am very pleased.

The matter is being handled.

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obligate us because we don't want his daddy to have to pay. He was playing in the Blind Football Game for Mr. Crump."

DR. CRAWFORD: But obligate the Crump Company if you have to?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. I went out there and talked them into cutting it to \$250. All I said was that if Mr. Crump has to pay this personally, I think it is terrible. And I think he would think it was terrible too!(Laughter)

So they cut it to \$250. Back then you take the late forties and early fifties just for setting a leg especially when a boy is playing for the benefit of the blind, that was outlandish.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about this employee that he gave a title and position to and kept on? Was this one of his salesmen?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, he had been a real estate salesman.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he become disabled or ill or something?

MR. GRAHAM: Just old.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Mr. Crump kept him on after he was unable to do any more work.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, after he lost his knack if he ever had a knack for selling.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did Mr. Crump ever seek any publicity for that sort of thing?

MR. GRAHAM: Never. I doubt if he would have allowed anybody to tell it. Of course, everybody knew he did it in the case of the Southside uniforms because everybody talked about it. But as far as his employees were concerned, he never told them. We had an employee that worked under my supervision there



when I was manager of the department. The boy went out of his mind. They had to put him in the Psychiatric Ward out the Veterans Hospital. That was when it was out on Park Avenue. The boy would come up to the office on Saturday and put religious tracts on my desk and Crump Jr.'s desk. Years later he never did return to work although he went to work for the federal government. His wife came up to see Crump Jr. She wanted to borrow money from him to build an addition to the little house they were trying to buy so she could open a day care center.

Crump Jr. called me and here was an ex-employee I am talking about--a former employee.

DR. CRAWFORD: The one who had the mental trouble?

MR. GRAHAM: I'll say emotional trouble because he later got a job in procurement for the government and did pretty good. Mr. Crump, Jr. asked me and I just told him what a fine woman she was and how she took care of her children and everything. Crump Jr. made that loan. So it followed through from his daddy on to E.H. Crump, Jr.

DR. CRAWFORD: How many employees would you guess he had at the time he died?

MR. GRAHAM: When I left Crump in '59 I believe there were 115 employees. When I went to work there, I think I was the 60th or the 65th employee.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it had more than doubled by that time. And you went there in '46, was it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, March of '46. Actually, the business doubled under E.H. Crump, Jr. That's who doubled the

business.

DR. CRAWFORD: You mean after his father died?

MR. GRAHAM: Before and after.

DR. CRAWFORD: When he took over the management?

MR. GRAHAM: Really, Mr. Crump never managed the business unless it came to key decisions. Stanley Trezevant went to him back in the early twenties and borrowed \$2500 dollars to open Crump and Trezevant. Stanley Trezevant was a real estate man. So it started out just as real estate. In about 1924 E.H. Crump, Jr. with an office less than 10 by 10--in fact, it was where the switchboard operator was--he started the insurance department.

So before you knew it, the tail was wagging the dog. Crump Jr. built that insurance department. He was the most brilliant young man I ever saw or have known personally. He was smart.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now he was not the elder son?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, he was. Ed Crump, Jr. was the son. Nobody but his close personal friend called him Ed though. It was either Edward or Mr. Crump, Jr. I always called him Mr. Crump, Jr.

DR. CRAWFORD: To distinguish him from his father?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. He was always my immediate boss there. Mr. Crump, Sr. took no part in the actual management of the place as long as I worked there for 13 years.

He had the final say on everything though.

DR. CRAWFORD: He kept his office and his desk there, didn't he?

MR. GRAHAM: He had one big office with brass rails around it there--the whole fifth floor. No, the whole fourth

DOBBINS

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DR. DEAN J. DEAN, JR.

floor. Then he had his hideaway on the fifth floor. He had that floor. There was a lawyer named Ralph--criminal lawyer with long bushy red hair--Ralph Davis. He had the front end of the fifth floor and Mr. Crump had the whole back side or west side of the fifth and that was his hideaway. He would lie down every afternoon up there. If he had a top meeting with Joe Boyle and Frank Rice, they met up there-- any big decisions. He had cardboard boxes full of books and things. He read a lot. He didn't go out to lunch.

Lillie, the maid, went out to get him a sandwich and a glass of milk at noon--Mr. Crump ate lunch there.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was his main office like on the fourth floor?
What did it look like?

MR. GRAHAM: Carpeted, nothing spectacular, but you would know that you were in the executive office when you went in there. He kept white runners on top of his carpets. When you walked in there you walked on white runners, you didn't walk on that carpet.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was the main office?

MR. GRAHAM: That was the office. The other I call his hideaway.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he have secretaries or anyone else at the main office floor?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh yes, he had Eddie Halback's sister who later married Bob Fredericks--Mrs. Fredericks. During the flood of '37 after she was his secretary, she would go with him and he would have Clint drive them. She would go so she could



take notes. They needed boats and he told Lee Lumber Company to build the boats and somebody would pay for it. They all believed it and did it and got paid for it.

Mrs. Fredericks later worked for the Memphis Housing Authority. Mrs. Humphreys followed Mrs. Fredricks as his secretary. She was his secretary when he died.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is Mrs. Fredericks still living?

MR. GRAHAM: She and Bob moved to Texas where her daughter lived. One of them died and I don't know which one. I don't know which town in Texas. Mr. Crump made Bob Fredericks, her husband, a city commissioner one time. Then, when the black people started moving in over around Southwestern (Rhodes) over there near Jackson and they were living there, the black people were all moving in just north of Jackson. The Fredericks moved into an apartment. It had a swimming pool and Bob told me one Sunday--he and his wife went to our church and Sunday School Class--he said, "They're moving in and he would do anything but dance and swim with them." (Laughter) I never will forget Bob telling me that. But they moved to Texas and I don't know whether Bob or his wife died. One or the other died though.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mrs. Humphreys took her place.

MR. GRAHAM: And she was working there when Mr. Crump died. Then she went to work in the insurance department there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is she still living, Jimmie?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't know. I'll tell you who is still living, Miss Clara Muller, who was the only woman executive

with E.H. Crump and Company.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you spell that sir?

MR. GRAHAM: Wait just a minute and I'll look it up. She lives right up the street. She's a shut-in. Clara E. M-U-L-L-E-R, 3553 Kenwood Avenue, 323-9298.

DR. CRAWFORD: She was the only woman executive with the Crump Company?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, she was E. H. Crump, Jr.'s executive secretary. In fact she did all his work and did a lot of work for Mr. E. H. Crump, Sr. But she was still there when I left in '59. I don't know when Clara retired. Maybe she retired when E. H. Crump, Jr. retired. Maybe she didn't retire until he died. I remember when they were taking out big insurance policies--a rather large policy on the executives--and one of the vice presidents didn't think a woman should have an amount equal to his, but Clara got it. She was probably the only one until they let all employees buy stock. She was probably the only one that owned stock in the company. She was the first and only secretary that E. H. Crump, Jr. ever had. She started when she was eighteen years old in 1924. She was still there I think when E. H. Crump, Jr. died.

She can't get out to drive a car, but Jack Parker, a former insurance salesman for E. H. Crump and Company, keeps her car and drives her everywhere she wants to go. Jack is a fine boy.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's good to have someone like that.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, he was like that. I remember he had just come to work for Crump when his mother was in the



hospital dying and he stayed by her bed night and day for six weeks and didn't come to work.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's loyalty.

MR. GRAHAM: It happened that he was pretty strong with the Crump organization. He had married a girl that worked there, by the way. Jack was pretty strong there, because his sister was Mrs. Watkins Overton.

DR. CRAWFORD: This is Jack Parker?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, tell me about his hideaway office. What did that look like--the one on the fifth floor?

MR. GRAHAM: It didn't have a desk in it. It had a daybed or or a cot and I believe it was a wicker couch. It was very sparcely furnished with a lot of cardboard boxes with a lot of books and papers in them. In fact, I went through them after his death and found an insurance policy that he bought in 1925.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he leave any of his political papers there?

MR. GRAHAM: If he did I didn't see any of them.

DR. CRAWFORD: So that was an office that he would go to get away from pressure or business, was it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. He rested there every day.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, with his heart condition it was probably a good idea.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: He would rest during the afternoon there?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't think he had a severe heart condition. It

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1998, 1999, 2000, 2001

was probably just a slight murmur because I am sure he didn't take any treatment for it other than walking.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they had been aware of that when he got that policy back in the twenties.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, but it was rated.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was certainly active thereafter. All this benevolence that he did, he didn't seek any publicity for that then and that was done because of his own convictions you believe?

MR. GRAHAM: You'd be surprised what he delivered on Christmas too personally.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he do at Christmas time?

MR. GRAHAM: Bags of groceries and orders of coal and stuff like that to poor families.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who handled that for him?

MR. GRAHAM: He did.

DR. CRAWFORD: He did that personally.

MR. GRAHAM: He and Clint.

DR. CRAWFORD: Clint was?

MR. GRAHAM: His chauffeur.

DR. CRAWFORD: He's not living now, I suppose?

MR. GRAHAM: No, Clint died. There was an article in the paper when he died about running a restaurant out on Mississippi Avenue. I think Clint's wife died since he did. I'm not sure on that. Clara would know because Clint drove Crump Jr. after his daddy died.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know how he selected those families he gave



help to at Christmas and made the deliveries to?

MR. GRAHAM: No, unless some employee or unless they appealed to him. I don't know. I don't think many people knew he did it.

DR. CRAWFORD: He just did that on his own.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What other charities did he support? He had the football game I believe.

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, most charities that he supported were not publicized. They publicized the blind game to get the money--to raise the money for the blind. Anything he did like his groceries at Christmas, was his private life. It wasn't done for any politics whatsoever. I would have known it.

DR. CRAWFORD: He kept that separate from his public life then?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the blind game? How was that organized? Who was benefited by it?

MR. GRAHAM: Cash or a check to the named blind. They'd get a list of the blind and they'd give them a check direct. They didn't go through any overhead management.

DR. CRAWFORD: There was some committee or some person who would handle that--the income from it?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was it well attended?

MR. GRAHAM: A sellout at Crump Stadium which was around 25,000 or 26,000 people all the time. It was just like this. I don't know whether I have told you or not, but I gave my



pictures to Frank Pidgeon, Crump, Jr.'s son-in-law, and this continued after his death. Crump Jr. and Robert Crump, his second boy, and myself are pictured in the paper of us standing in front of Mr. Crump's picture just after his death. They gave me a \$1500 check for the blind. He started off with \$1500 and his sons continued it.

One year we had the picture made out at Frank Pidgeon's house out on Goodlett. I took a blind man out there to accept the \$1500 check and the next one at the blind school next to the East Memphis Lions Club of a little girl being given a check by Mr. Crump's great grandson. I gave the pictures to Frank Pidgeon whose son died an untimely death. I gave all my Crump pictures to people who are still connected with the Crump Company just a few years ago.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is Frank Pidgeon still living?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. He was a son of the Pidgeon-Thomas Pidgeon.

I asked Frank when he came to work for Crump, and he came as a Vice President. I asked Frank why he didn't stay down at Pidgeon-Thomas with his daddy. He said, "I don't get along with him too well." So he came to work for Crump. And instead of just taking his son-in-law, E. H. Crump, Jr. was actually running the company (E. H. Crump, Jr. actually did this) and made Frank Pidgeon a Vice President and then he made this fellow in the real estate department (I can't think of his name) a vice president so that people wouldn't think that he was being partial to his son-in-law.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Frank Pidgeon was Mr. Crump's son-in-law?

MR. GRAHAM: Young Crump's son-in-law. He married Louise Crump who was the oldest daughter of E. H. Crump, Jr. E. H. Crump, Jr. had three daughters.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who did the others marry?

MR. GRAHAM: Demitria married Steve McLaughlin. Steve's daddy was an executive with Sears and Roebuck. He came to work for E.H.Crump and Company in the real estate department. and the third Louise Crump married a Smithwick. I don't know his first name. He went to work for E. H. Crump and Company.

DR. CRAWFORD: So all three did.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, all three son-in-laws of E. H. Crump, Jr. and the grandson-in-laws of E. H. Crump, Sr.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, in the Blind Game what players did they use in that?

MR. GRAHAM: The two best high school teams in Memphis would always play.

DR. CRAWFORD: Southside might not always be in it.. It would be the two leading teams.

MR. GRAHAM: Southside was always pretty much up there when Hick Ewing, Sr. was coaching.

DR. CRAWFORD: Which team did he coach?

MR. GRAHAM: Southside. He had played there and then he went to Howard University and played and then he came back as coach there when Brindley, the first coach at Southside, went to Humes High School as Principal.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now this was Hick Ewing who was coach?

MR. GRAHAM: Senior. The Attorney General's daddy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thought I should mention that the
committee has received a letter from the
American Medical Association, dated January 10, 1940,
in which they state that they have no objection
to the proposed legislation, provided that the
provisions of the bill are not changed.
The committee has also received a letter from the
American Pharmaceutical Association, dated January 10,
in which they state that they have no objection
to the proposed legislation, provided that the
provisions of the bill are not changed.
The committee has also received a letter from the
American Nurses' Association, dated January 10,
in which they state that they have no objection
to the proposed legislation, provided that the
provisions of the bill are not changed.
The committee has also received a letter from the
American College of Surgeons, dated January 10,
in which they state that they have no objection
to the proposed legislation, provided that the
provisions of the bill are not changed.
The committee has also received a letter from the
American Association of Economic Sociologists,
dated January 10, in which they state that they
have no objection to the proposed legislation,
provided that the provisions of the bill are not
changed.
The committee has also received a letter from the
American Association of Public Health Officers,
dated January 10, in which they state that they
have no objection to the proposed legislation,
provided that the provisions of the bill are not
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provided that the provisions of the bill are not
changed.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was it Howard University he went to?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, in Birmingham. Brindley, his coach in high school had gone to school there. Hick Ewing was a good football and baseball player. He later coached down at Mississippi State. It is funny how he got the job at Southside. You wouldn't believe this, but Ersell (Red) Cavette, Bubba (James) Blackwell, Criminal Court Clerk and Squirrel Simmons (Walter Simmons) went to Mr. Crump and wanted Hick Ewing to get the coaching job and somehow another he got it at Southside.

DR. CRAWFORD: When was this Blind Game played? Was that near the end of the season after the regular season?

MR. GRAHAM: After the season was over.

DR. CRAWFORD: Late fall or early winter?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And it was always a sellout.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh yes. Members of the Lions Clubs and Mr. Crump's followers would sell tickets.

I had regular customers like Mr. Joe Hyde, of Malone and Hyde Company. He always gave me a check for \$1500. I'd say, "How many tickets do you want, Mr. Hyde?"

He'd say, "A dozen or so." Then he would give them to his employees.

It was pretty good to call on liquor stores. You'd be surprised how many tickets they bought and gave away. So you had your regular route that you would call on. But I'd win a prize at the Lion's Club every year because I had \$3,000 of sales to start with. I'd have \$1500 from E.H. Crump and Company and \$1500 from

DR. CAROL ANN WILSON

MR. JAMES E. WILSON

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Malone and Hyde. So I knew I had \$3,000. I won watches and pins and stuff from the Lion's Club. Lion's Club sponsored the Blind Football Game.

DR. CRAWFORD: Would they collect the receipts and disburse them to the blind?

MR. GRAHAM: There was a committee that did that and I don't know how the committee was organized or who named them or what. I am sure that Mr. Crump had his eye on it so that it all went to the blind.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you say they gave it directly to the blind. This did not go to an organization for them or something?

MR. GRAHAM: No. It may have gone through the name of the bank account of the Lion's Club, but each blind person got a check.

DR. CRAWFORD: I don't know of any other city that ever had something like that.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, it fairly died down after he died because no one could fill the stadium after Mr. Crump died.

DR. CRAWFORD: I can believe that. A great deal of this came through the power of Mr. Crump's personality I am sure and the reputation that he had.

Well, that was a major part of the year. A number of things in Memphis were related to that.

Another thing related to Mr. Crump was the Mid-South Fair. That was an annual event that went back to the middle of the previous century. It had a lot of people to attend. What did he

do in conjunction with the fair?

MR. GRAHAM: Really I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he have a certain day sometimes that he made use of?

MR. GRAHAM: No, I can't remember a Crump Day at the Fair. If they had it, I don't recollect it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he do something for children in connection with the Fair?

MR. GRAHAM: As far as I know, no.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the occasion that he did. He did something I have heard.

MR. GRAHAM: That had nothing to do with the Fair or anything. He would just make the Fairgrounds free.

DR. CRAWFORD: Oh, the whole Fairgrounds.

MR. GRAHAM: Free, but they didn't have the barkers and everything there when he had the Fairgrounds. He just made the whole Fairgrounds free. It wasn't during the Mid-South Fair at all. Crump Day was never then.

Now, we had Mrs. Crump Day. She had one day during Lent at Calvary Episcopal Church. She paid for all of our lunches. Everybody went from Crump and we could go over there and eat free on Mrs. Crump.

DR. CRAWFORD: Everyone from E. H. Crump and Company would go to Calvary Episcopal?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, on Mrs. Crump Sr. Day. She was a fine woman.

DR. CRAWFORD: She was charitable too. The Fairgrounds were open



the year round, were they? Or a lot of it and it was an amusement area for children?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, you had games out there and the Pippin, a ride, a ferris wheel and a merry-go-round. The tennis courts were open the year round and they were asphalt tennis courts. You had the casino where the coliseum is now and that was a dance hall. Joe Bennett ran the dance hall for years and years. First he had open air pavilion dance--ten cents a dance. All my life guards when they got off from Fairgrounds Swimming Pool and me before I became manager of the pool and before I was married and as soon as we closed the pool at ten o'clock would shoot up there to the rat races as we called it. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: The casino?

MR. GRAHAM: No, it was the open air thing. It wasn't the casino. This was north of the Fairgrounds offices. You would go in the main gate and north of it was the open air dance floor. Then to the south of it was the Casino between the fire station and the Fairgrounds Offices. Then you had the tennis courts and then you had a sunken garden where they played softball all summer. You had the Fairgrounds Municipal Swimming Pool that I managed the summer of '32 and '33. That was a 1,250,000 gallon pool--the biggest pool anywhere around here--built like a plate. Of course, you had the Women's Building and the Auto-Show Building out there, the Cattle Building. The pool closed the last day in August or maybe Labor Day. Then about November you would open the Athletic Building. It had three basketball courts--all asphalt

floor--archery and a horseshoe pitching ring and box hockey and a number of other activities.

We would have three basketball games going on at the same time in that building when I was managing it there. I think I told you that was back during the Depression there and we couldn't fill the building so I got Kroger to take one night--Wednesday night was Kroger Night--and I had ten basketball teams from the Kroger Stores. I kept my attendance up during the Depression out there.

That was actually the Fairgrounds then. It wasn't anything like it is now. It didn't cost anything to go in the gate or anything like that only during the Mid-South Fair.

DR. CRAWFORD: But would Mr. Crump rent the rides and pay the fees for a day or something for children?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, in other words he would rent the Fairgrounds just like he did later. Of course, the Fairgrounds had been built up much more when Elvis came along. Mr. Crump would just rent the Fairgrounds and everything would be free out there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that a certain time in the year?

MR. GRAHAM: I can't say. I can't remember him doing it over four or five times. It wasn't regular like the Blind Football Game. His boat rides were one every year and they would have watermelon and stuff like that.

Crump Day at the Fairgrounds I can't remember that being just election years or something like that I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: How was the day for the children at the Fairgrounds



publicized?

MR. GRAHAM: Actually, back in those days we didn't have too much television. It was actually radio, newspapers and pictures of Mr. Crump and somebody else.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, another event was the boat ride. Did that come at a certain time in the year?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't think so. I couldn't put it in seasons. I couldn't place either one of them in seasons.

DR. CRAWFORD: The Blind Game was the only one you knew the time?

MR. GRAHAM: It had to be in the fall or early winter.

DR. CRAWFORD: After they had played their [regular] season.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the boat ride? Who went on them and what was the purpose of it?

MR. GRAHAM: The purpose was to take orphans on a boat ride. St. Peters Orphanage, Leath Orphanage and any other underprivileged children. It was supposed to be a children's boat ride.

DR. CRAWFORD: They would be brought down by?

MR. GRAHAM: By different organizations would bring them down.

DR. CRAWFORD: They would have the free tour on the boat then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, and you would go up the river and come back down, go five miles one way and come back the other. Something like that.

See, we used to have on that river the old Kate Adams which went on up to the Ohio River and on down to New Orleans. Then you had the Princess and we used to call it the Battleship because



more fights were on that.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you call it?

MR. GRAHAM: Battleship. The Princess and the Idlewild went all the way to Cairo, [Illinois] and back down here. One boat came through here just a couple of years ago and it was the old Idlewild rebuilt. You could pay 50 cents to board it and they would have a band. Joe Bennett played on the Idlewild. He was a pianist in the orchestra. You'd go down there Sunday afternoon, Sunday night, and believe every night during the week you could ride the Princess or the Idlewild.

The Princess was just a tough boat. You'd go on there ready to fight. The Idlewild was a little nicer class boat.

DR. CRAWFORD: The Princess was where you had a rowdier crowd.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was sort of like the Memphis Belle and the Belle Carol.

MR. GRAHAM: They are doing the same thing as the Princess and the Idlewild, but I don't know whether the Memphis Belle and them go up to Cairo like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: He would rent one of those boats for the trip for the children. Who else went along? Friends, supporters?

MR. GRAHAM: Certain employees--some of them were working with organizations, many politicians. Always Francis Andrews and people like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let me ask about a few people in the organization then, Jimmie. What were Francis Andrews' duties in

the organization? What did he do mainly?

MR. GRAHAM: Take orders and run errands.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about Frank Rice? What did he contribute to the organization?

MR. GRAHAM: He contributed his brains as well as his physical ability. Mr. Rice was an advisor as well as a lieutenant.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he an attorney?

MR. GRAHAM: I don't know. I never heard of him being an attorney.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know.

MR. GRAHAM: I never heard of him being an attorney.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was an advisor to Mr. Crump.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh yes. He controlled a lot of votes. Frank Rice did.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know what precincts or what wards he was active in?

MR. GRAHAM: Probably every one in Memphis.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was that high.

MR. GRAHAM: He was next to Mr. Crump, period.

DR. CRAWFORD: Even above Francis Andrews?

MR. GRAHAM: Oh yes. Francis was fine loud-mouth man, but he did exactly what Mr. Crump said. Mr. Crump ordered Francis Andrews and he advised with Frank Rice.

DR. CRAWFORD: I see the difference. Where did Joe Boyle fit in? What was his relationship?

MR. GRAHAM: He carried the Ninth Ward and lot of North Memphis.

There was Goat Hill and all out in there. Mr. Boyle controlled that and he was very valuable aide to Mr. Crump. But again, he wasn't in the same class with Frank Rice and E.W. Hale, Sr.

DR. CRAWFORD: Tell me where Goat Hill was located?

MR. GRAHAM: Around Poplar and High. Do you know where Milo's Liquor Store was? It isn't Milo's anymore. Do you know where the old Board of Education Building was? Poplar and E. H. Crump Blvd. North of that over in there. All the way out to Jackson.

DR. CRAWFORD: North of Poplar and there to High. What were the streets on either side of it generally? I've heard the name and never knew just where it was located.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I'd say that Goat Hill would be from Poplar to probably Jackson Avenue and from Front Street to Dunlap somewhat. Some where in that general vicinity.

DR. CRAWFORD: It's a fairly large area.

MR. GRAHAM: Oh yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you have any idea how it got the name Goat Hill?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, I don't know, but when I was on Market Square Playground--it was about as big as a postage stamp--that was in 1930 when I went up to Market Square and I was working at the Fairgrounds Swimming Pool as lifeguard and they were throwing the playground director in the wading pool every night and I just had been made captain of Memphis State's football team and supposed to be a tough guy, see. So Curtis Turner from the Park Commission came to see Carol Walden and told him he would

like for me to go up there to the playground. So Carol Walden called me in the office to talk with him and I was making \$90 a month in 1930 at the swimming pool.

Curtis Turner said he would give me \$125 a month if I would go up there, but not to tell anybody.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a good raise.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. So I went on up there, but I was getting a dollar a night at the pool for sleeping there at night. I'd sleep there six nights a week and get a dollar a night because the manager slept out there too, but he'd like to have a date and leave. So Carol gave me a dollar a night. And Gene Fulghum and I had cots in the guard room and we slept at the pool.

I went up to Market Square and didn't have any trouble, but we had a plumber, Lee Ford. And you know what his transportation was? A wagon and a big black goat. (Laughter) Yes sir. We had some fine people on that playground and they turned out to be pretty good citizens from Market Square. That was the edge of Pinch at Market and Exchange. People like Nat Buring, and the fellow who was president of Humko, Cooper. Dr. Greene, a dentist, and we had the Chafetz boys who started Kimco Company. The Bozof boys who started the Marl Metal Furniture Company.

DR. CRAWFORD: Morris, Albert and Robert and Lewis Bozof and that's why they called it the Marl Company.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, and the Chafetz got Kimco the same way--Kimco. Karl spelled with a 'K', Irvin, Mickey and that's where they got Kimco from.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, what happened at the playground? They had



been throwing the playground supervisor in the wading pool every night. When you got there what happened Jimmie?

MR. GRAHAM: I figured if they threw me in I wouldn't resist.

He would fight but I wouldn't resist. They didn't try to throw me in because the first ones I ran into was Carl "Scab" Borrasso and Charlie Jones. I ran into four boys that had been in my class at CBC. The big boys were jealous of the playground director that had preceeded me because he spent his time with the little boys and paid no attention to them. So I would play with the little boys in the afternoon and the big boys after dark. I would work with any of them. When I knew Carl Barrasso--at CBC we all called him "Scab"--and I can't think of Jones' nickname, but he worked for the Frisco Railroad and he had gone to CBC with me. He wore heavy hightop shoes, but he could pitch a softball and don't think he couldn't steal a base because he came in with feet up just like old Ty Cobb used to come into a base. If you got in front of those heavy shoes, he'd cut you to pieces.

We had Nat Buring, who would always arrive late. He was working in his uncle's butcher shop. Louie Bozof who was later president of Marl Metal Manufacturing Company and he worked in his uncle's tin shop during the day. So I would have those guys coming from work playing at night on the softball team. Abe Brooks didn't want to get dirty so he'd be my umpire. I had them all on Market Square.

I'd give a dance. I'd get a three-piece band and give a dance in the wading pool on the concrete. Those poor girls with



cheap shoes would wear them out in one night dancing in that wading pool.

DR. CRAWFORD: On the concrete?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. I'd go to Levy's Drug Store and to a lawyer and I'd get \$15 out of them and hire a three-piece band for the \$15 and they would have a free dance. Then I had a Pence-Jones Pie Company that would give us pies.

DR. CRAWFORD: What company was that?

MR. GRAHAM: Pence - Jones Pie Company used to be over near the Baptist Hospital. They'd give us pies. One time Carl Chafetz and another guy stole a pie. I had the pies out on the table for Brinkley Day. The park was called Market Square, but really the name was Brinkley Playground. They stole that pie and I ran and caught them and I took Carl Chefetz and that maringue pie and just washed his face with it. (Laughter)

One night when I was explaining group insurance to his employees after they got off from work--early evening--he had 200 employees and he told them that I was the only one that ever had washed his face with a pie. So he did it! He still gave me the insurance business. We were friends after that.

Then we had a guy who used to play on my little softball team that turned out to be a good football player at Memphis State--Paul Hicks. He was later in charge for the state of Tennessee Rehabilitation office here. Paul was one of my little boys on the playground at Market Square.

DR. CRAWFORD: You've influenced a lot of people in that work.

MR. GRAHAM: You treat them right, but you had as the late Slick



Headen used to say, "You have to have discipline." Only he would say it "disCIPline." And he was a graduate of Columbia University. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Whatever it was he had it.

MR. GRAHAM: He had it! I had it! Any place I went. In other words, with my lifeguards, if one of them accused me of being tough or just being tough because I was the manager or the boss I'd shut that door. I'd say, "Okay, if you whip me I'll resign." I had trouble with Piggy Klinke, the fire chief's son. He thought because Joe Brennan had put him on my payroll that he could do what he wanted to out there. So I called Piggy in and I said, "You are suspended for three days."

" Oh, you can't do that," he said. I didn't know that Billy Murray and the rest of them were looking through the transom going out into the dressing room and into the office So I said, "Get going Piggy, if you whip me I'll resign."

I didn't have any more trouble out there with my lifeguards cause Piggy was bigger than me. But I figured I was faster than he was. So I didn't have any more trouble.

DR. CRAWFORD: Once again you had discipline.

MR. GRAHAM: You had to have it. Henry Hammond is still living, and he is Buster Hammond's brother. He was one of my lifeguards. He was a good one. In fact, he played at Southwestern when Southwestern beat Alabama and then he went with the Chicago Bears. Henry started picking on Robert Mantell who was a U.T. student in Knoxville. He was a very clean cut boy. His daddy was Chemist at the Water Department. Henry kept picking



on him. So my cousin was working there for me. Steamboat Jones-- James Albert--he pushed Henry off. They were both going to Central High School. They went to it.

I said, "Cut it out, guys." They didn't cut it out so I pushed them out and I said, "Steamboat, get over there." And he moved but Henry came at me. He was left-handed and threw it like he was throwing a hay fork. I stepped in and dropped him. I didn't have any more fuss out of him.

I didn't have a car and they would pick us (Evelyn and me) up every Monday night. Henry after me decking him would pick us up every Monday night and would take us to Peabody. The pool was closed on Mondays.

DR. CRAWFORD: Once again, you had discipline.

MR. GRAHAM: Well, that was the only way you could get it sometimes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, times were different then.

MR. GRAHAM: So I told the person who succeeded me at the pool, I said, "If you have any trouble, hit them first but then arrest them." You carry a special officer's badge as manager. You had to be sworn in by Cliff Davis, Commissioner.

I said, "Deck them and then arrest them." I said, "Don't arrest them and let them hit you first."

DR. CRAWFORD: What you had was discipline there, wasn't it?

MR. GRAHAM: Yes, you try to talk yourself out of trouble but when you can't, go into action.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Jimmie, that was one way that Memphis has changed a lot. There's not much fighting now.



MR. GRAHAM: Oh yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: There used to be, didn't there?

MR. GRAHAM: Well, then you fought fair. If you went to a dance and they had an argument, you'd take the girls home and then you'd meet out at Overton Park or Bellevue Park, put the cars around and turn the lights on and go to it with your fists. That's the way you handled it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that very common then?

MR. GRAHAM: I had a fellow that I ran around with, Leonard McTyier. He was a small guy that didn't weigh over a hundred thirty-five pounds, but his wrists were as big as my biceps. We would work out at the Y and he was left-handed. He'd catch you with that left and set you on your seat. As big as I was, he could knock me down. I couldn't whip him. So I said, "Len, when we get in an argument at a dance--we used to get in arguments. I said, "Anybody over 155 pounds I'll take and anybody under 155 pounds you take."

So a machinist from the IC Railroad got in an argument with a policeman--Toll Fowler and his brother, Jim Fowler--two city policemen. Toll later became an inspector. They got into an argument and the machinist tore Jim Fowler's sleeve off. His name was Jigger Williams. Those Fowler boys on the police force were tough. Jim went for his pistol. Toll grabbed him and I grabbed this guy that tore Jim's sleeve off.

I said, "You come on out under the trees here and we'll take care of this." And I told Toll, "You keep Jim quiet, we'll take care of this." So we went over there, and got the automobile



lights tured on and then I told Len, "He's your size."
(Laughter)

Before I could turn around and get the crowd back, I looked down and there was Williams lying on the ground. Len had hit him with that left. It broke the guy's jaw.

DR. CRAWFORD: It broke his jaw.

MR. GRAHAM: Boy, that's where all the fighters punch comes from is from the wrist anyhow. In other words, you don't have to have big muscles. You have good wrists. We had fights like that then. They have them now, but they use knives. You see where a teenager kills a teenager arguing. We have it especially among our Black people. There is not a day in the paper you can't see it. So you have a lot more fights now than you had then because the population is greater. So I don't know if it is percentage wise or not, but now they hit the paper. Then they didn't.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, you have knives and guns used and so forth and that didn't happen much then, did it?

MR. GRAHAM: If you had a fight, you fought with your fists and settled it. You might become good friends after that.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did people fight about usually?

MR. GRAHAM: Still women. Sometimes you would find people in automobiles. They would try to race you or something like that. I had two cousins that lived up the street from me on Tutwiler. They had a Dodge touring car--top let down. They had a whistle on it like a steamboat. We'd get in that thing



and go ride the boat, you know. A guy coming down Summer Avenue one night after the boat came in at midnight. This guy in this car made some smart remark to us and Sammy Townsley was driving and I said, "Sammy, follow that guy." And we followed that guy right on home. I got out of the car and whipped him. He was calling us bad words. That was what you would fight about.

DR. CRAWFORD: Times were different then.

MR. GRAHAM: Yes. Now it is generally a woman or a debt.

We had a lot of people shooting dice and cutting people up. Your cutting and maiming and stuff like that was mostly done in the Black community.

DR. CRAWFORD: That is one way that Memphis has changed.







